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The Fair Ladies of
Hampton Court



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Miss Pitt afterwards Mrs. Scrope
After the painting in Hampton Court Palace
by Sir Godfrey Kneller.

The Fair Ladies of Hampton Court

By

Clare Jerrold

With Introduction by Walter Jerrold

“I have beauties to unfold”—GEORGE WITHER

With Photogravure Portrait and Twenty-one
other Portraits

Boston

Little, Brown, and Company

1911

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Introduction

THE irresponsible gaiety—the sacrificing of everything to the pleasure of the moment—that marked the beginning of the short period during which England endured the restored Stuarts has often been spoken of as a mere natural reaction against the puritanical repression of the Commonwealth period. The point has perhaps been stressed overmuch. It may be doubted whether the Court life of the Second Charles was anything much more than a local fever; it may be believed that the people as a whole retained something of *mens sana in corpore sano*. Samuel Pepys wrote significantly in his diary in 1668 “the business of abusing the Puritans begins to grow stale and of no use, they being the people that, at last, will be found the wisest.” Even when quarter of a century of faithlessness and frivolity had done its worst to undermine the stability of the nation it was able to make a quick recovery after the scuttling of James the Second, a saturnine rake who lacked even the superficial attractiveness of his brother.

The period of those two reigns, 1660 to 1688, looms almost unduly large in our history. It was one which as a nation we may well look back upon without pride as one in which British prestige reached its nadir; a period the record of which is marked by little that is noble, by much that was ignoble—and the ignoble was largely connected with the Court and its influence, the noble was something in despite of it. The study of morbid manifestations may, however, as surely have its sociological value when they appear in the body corporate as pathologically they have when they appear in the individual. This is perhaps in part the reason why the story of the prominent personages about the “Merry Monarch’s” Court has something of perennial attraction for many readers. It is a story full of life and colour, a story of the play of human passions, of pleasure and other forms of self-seeking, of jealousy and intrigue almost without restraint, and of the various causes that help to make that story a particularly vivid one. Contemporary pictures, diaries, letters, and memoirs combine to make the years that followed the Restoration the earliest period that we can know with such a degree of intimacy, as enables us at once to visualize and realize men and women as they were.

The author of this volume has explained the circumstances in which the dual series of portraits that have come to be known as the Hampton

INTRODUCTION

Court Beauties were painted, but here it may be pointed out that modern portrait painting may in one sense be said to date from the days of Charles the Second. There had been other—and greater—portrait painters before Sir Peter Lely and Sir Godfrey Kneller, but it was in their time that the exercise of the art seems to have widened so that everybody who was anybody had to be “immortalized” on canvas—almost as inevitably as to-day everybody who is nobody has to be given the fleeting immortality of the photograph. To the fact that we can see them, if not in the habit as they lived, at least in the habit as they posed, we owe something of our interest in the varied women whose life stories are here sketched. If to the portrait painters we owe it that we can see what sort of women it was who gave colour to Charles’s Court, to the diarists, letter writers, and other pen-and-ink gossipers of the period we owe it that we can also learn something of their characters—that we can contrast the grasping self-seeking of Louise de Kéroualle with the simple self-abandonment of Nell Gwyn, the gay irresponsibility of “La Belle Stuart” with the dignified purity of “La Belle Hamilton.” Thanks to these writers, as has been said, the closing decades of the seventeenth century are made more intimately real to us than any earlier period—what would we not give for the diaries of some Samuel Pepys and John Evelyn of the reigns of James the First and his predecessors? If to full diaries we owe something of our knowledge of the time in which these “Beauties” lived, they and their lives may be regarded as not having been without an indirect influence upon literature, for we seem in the satires of Pope to get an expression of the reaction against the earlier looseness of all moral ties—though his time had by no means become strait-laced!

Pope may, indeed, be regarded as having summed up several of the Court ladies in his essay concerning “the Characters of Women,” and we may find many of them whom the whimsical contrarieties of “Narcissa” would fit :

“Narcissa’s nature, tolerably mild,
To make a wash, would hardly stew a child ;
Has ev’n been proved to grant a Lover’s prayer,
And paid a Tradesman once to make him stare ;
Gave Alms at Easter, in a Christian trim,
And made a Widow happy, for a whim.
Why then declare Good-nature is her scorn,
When ’tis alone by that she can be borne ?
Why pique all mortals, yet affect a name ?
A fool to Pleasure, yet a slave to Fame :
Now deep in Taylor and the Book of Martyrs,
Now drinking Citron with his Grace and Chartres :
Now Conscience chills her, and now Passion burns ;
And Atheism and Religion take their turns ;
A very Heathen in the carnal part,
Yet still a sad, good Christian at her heart.”

WALTER JERROLD

PART I

SIR PETER LELY

LELY

“ Not as of old, when a rough hand did speak
A strong aspect, and a fair face, a weak ;
When only a black beard cried villain, and
By Hieroglyphicks we could understand ;
When crystal typified in a white spot,
And the bright ruby was but one red blot ;
Thou dost the thing orientally the same
Not only paintst its colour, but its flame ;
Thou sorrow canst design without a tear,
And with the man his very hope or fear ;
So that th’ amazed world shall henceforth find
None but my Lely ever drew a mind.”

Richard Lovelace.

THE FAIR LADIES OF HAMPTON COURT

CHAPTER I

THE MATCHLESS BEAUTIES

“Oh, Kneller ! like thy pictures were my song,
Clear like thy paint, and like thy pencil strong,
The Matchless Beauties should recorded be,
Immortal in my verse, as in thy gallery.”

Lord Lansdowne.

ABOUT one hundred and fifty years ago two sisters, renowned for their beauty, Elizabeth and Maria Gunning, went to see Hampton Court. The dozen pictures, known at that time as “The Hampton Court Beauties,” were then without rivals in the building, and all visitors made a point of seeing them, being conducted by the housekeeper, who—another instance of the shameless way in which modern woman has stolen the work of the stronger sex—was always, at that period, a man. As the housekeeper was deferentially guiding the fair Gunning through the rooms, he saw a number of sightseers in the doorway, and, wishing to combine the two parties, called out :

“This way, ladies ; this way to the Beauties ! ”

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The Gunning sisters started as though a bomb had burst before them ; their faces crimsoned, their eyes flashed, and, turning simultaneously upon the man, they cried in voices shaking with anger :

“ How dare you insult us like this ? Are we never to be at ease, or to see a public place without being mobbed and persecuted ? We came here to see the pictures, not to be made a show to the crowd ! ”

We are told that they stormed and raved to the wondering horror of the innocent housekeeper, and to the week-long joy of their laughing friends. It is a pity that their portraits are not also at Hampton Court, that we might compare yet another generation of loveliness with those which now hang on the walls of the great rooms.

It was Mary of Orange who, fired by the example of her mother in regard to Sir Peter Lely, determined, while King William was on one of his long absences, to commission Sir Godfrey Kneller to paint the pictures of the most beautiful ladies of her Court, and it is said that this action contributed to make her very unpopular. Lady Dorchester advised her against it with the argument :

“ Madam, if the King were to ask for the portraits of all the wits of his Court, would not the rest think he called them fools ? ”

The Queen, however, would not be dissuaded, and ordered twelve portraits to be painted of the best-looking ladies who either attended upon her or were frequently in her retinue, Kneller being knighted for his performance, receiving a medal and a chain worth £300. These portraits were first hung in the Water



PRINCESS MARY, LATER QUEEN OF ENGLAND, AS DIANA

(*After Lely*)

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Gallery, for at that time the King's and Queen's Apartments round the Fountain Court were being rebuilt, and Mary had her residence in the Water Gallery, a building close upon the river. The portraits remained there after the Queen's death, until, the new palace being completed, that gallery was pulled down, as it obstructed the view of the river. The pictures were then put in a room directly under the King's Guard Chamber, which was thenceforth called the Beauty Room, and is now known as the Oak Room. When in 1850 various alterations were made in the arrangements of this palace with its thousand apartments, Kneller's pictures were finally hung in King William's Presence Chamber.

Only nine of the twelve portraits are now at the Court, and these are all full-length figures in long, dignified robes, placed high upon the dark oak walls in not too good a light. They are perhaps somewhat neglected by the public, being put into the shade by those other Beauties brought from Windsor Castle a century ago, the fair, frail beauties of the Restoration. In early days these latter were known as the Windsor Beauties, but how can such a distinction be carried on through the years? Ninety-nine people out of a hundred in speaking of the Hampton Court Beauties think chiefly of the women of the Court of Charles II, who gaze sleepily from their bright canvases, holding some flowing and impossible clothing to their bared breasts, often against a background of woodland and stream.

There seems to have been no disapprobation expressed when Anne Hyde, the Duchess of York, commissioned Lely to paint the pictures of the fair

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dames who helped to make Charles's Court something more than merely gay ; and it is quite likely that James had as much to do with the choice of subjects as his wife, while Charles had more to do with it than either. When it came to the painting it was a foregone conclusion that Lady Castlemaine would stand first, and indeed Lely painted her portrait many times. To mention her is to think of the pretty, childish, elusive Frances Stuart, whose virtue has been as much discussed as that of Lady Blessington, though with perhaps a somewhat clearer result. The beautiful, high-spirited Elizabeth Hamilton must have been painted early in the list, for she went from the Court before many years had passed over it. Nell Gwyn, the single-hearted, was limned by Lely more than once, but unfortunately Hampton Court Palace does not possess a single picture of the woman who, content with a comparatively modest income, demanded no honours for herself from her King.

Lely's pictures of the Duchess of Portsmouth are not here, though there is one by a Dutch painter named Verelst, which was brought from Kensington, showing her in a red robe as Flora. That Lady Belasyse should have shared in the honour would have been anything but pleasing to the Duchess if she could have foreseen a little beyond her own death ; and there can be no doubt that she would willingly have forbidden the inclusion in her gallery of the fair Margaret Brooke, who married Lord Denham, and whose early death caused such widespread scandal. Anne's own portrait is not the least interesting of the group, for she was very typical of the women of her

day—the women who seem to have shared equally with the men in the terrible reaction against Puritanism ; but this portrait has never been engraved and thus cannot be included.

There were those who would attribute the worst of Charles's faults to the ladies of his Court. Bishop Burnet says that the King was debauched by his mistresses, an absurd statement, seeing that in character Charles was wilful, vain, idle, and pleasure-loving. Before the Restoration a thoughtful Englishman remarked that if Charles were invited to wear the crown it would mean that the government of the kingdom would be given over to courtesans and sycophants—his language was of a simpler, coarser kind. “ What shall we do with such a King ? ” asked another. “ In Brussels he dances night and day ; he does nothing but dance and hunt.” And, indeed, when Charles was penniless his trouble was, not that he could not feed the people who clustered round him, but that he could not pay a fiddler for the dance. That was Charles to the day of his death ! He flung hundreds of thousands of pounds away upon the dance of life, and starved the servants in his kitchen. The very figure of the dance showed his character ; to bow, to advance and retire ; to set to this partner and to that ; to pursue, to embrace—it was the beginning and ending of life for him, and generally it mattered little who was his partner, for to such a universal lover every pretty face was welcome.

Yet to a great extent Charles was moulded by his times. He had many of his father's characteristics—that father for whom he had felt both admiration and affection ; he had narrowly escaped from his own

country and had been obliged to live hardly in France, in Coblenz, in Holland ; in proportion as he had suffered he hated the Puritans, whom he regarded as the cause of his suffering ; and in that hatred he included all their ways and customs. There were many to encourage him in his resentment, for Royalists had been obliged to send their boys abroad for safety and education, causing them to imbibe the thoughts and habits of the French. In Paris they were confirmed in their papistry and encouraged in their scorn of the Roundheads. They also learned many other things which had no place in the Court of Charles I, who at least lived a pure domestic life ; and when at last the chance came, they brought to England all their French accomplishments, with which to enliven and pollute the nation.

The Restoration was a wild carnival played out by a delirious people and an irresponsible King. For fifteen years Charles had lived from hand to mouth, upon a dole from France, gifts from his family and people, and loans from others. His purse, his mistress, and his dance were the only things that had filled his mind. Occasionally when abroad he had been obliged to walk circumspectly because the people of the town in which he resided hated his ways, his wild life, his profanation of the Sabbath, and his followers ; but England was his own as soon as he set foot upon its shores, and though he had made many good resolutions they scarcely survived the journey to London.

What could such a man make of the art of government, and what could the crown mean to such a mind but greater opportunity for licence ? There is no doubt that Charles meant to be a good king ; he was

kind-hearted and generous, and he intended at first to show gratitude to his friends, but these sentiments could not outlive the desire of the moment ; they evaporated, and all that was left was a determination to amuse himself and to be revenged on his old enemies. He was always poor, while those around him grew rich ; he could no more resist a personal request for money than he could willingly pay a debt ; he would allow a rapacious woman to take thousands from him, to sell places, to rob the country's exchequer, while he himself went about without a coin in his pocket. On one occasion he and his brother, with some of their friends, spent the greater part of the night in a hostel drinking and card-playing, but mostly drinking ; and when they would have gone away they could not among them muster enough money to pay the reckoning. Consulting as to what they should do, the King's eyes fell upon one of his companions, Tom Sheridan, who was helplessly drunk ; so they all slipped away, telling their host that the gentleman left behind would pay—which Sheridan had to do in the morning !

Colley Cibber tells a story illustrating Charles's usual state of poverty. Nell Gwyn gave a concert of music in her private lodgings, at which the King and the Duke of York were present, also one or two others who were generally admitted to these little parties. When the performance was over the King expressed himself as being highly pleased, and gave the musicians extraordinary commendation.

“ Then, Sir,” said the lady, “ to show you don't speak like a courtier, I hope you will make them a handsome present.”

The King said he had no money about him and asked the Duke if he had any, to which James replied :

“ I believe, Sir, I have only a guinea or two.”

Upon which Nell, laughing and turning to the people about her, cried :

“ Od’s fish ! what company am I got into ? ”

Poor obstinate James seems to have been more objectionable than his brother in his amours. Charles frankly fell in love—of sorts—while James followed intrigue because he felt it to be the thing to do. We never hear of his being unhappy because a beauty would not smile upon him, or of enduring the tempers and threats of a light woman whom he loved too much to dismiss. He was cold and selfish at heart, but he belonged to his time and felt that he would be out of fashion if he did not show to his gentlemen an example of princely luxury and abandonment.

When William III sat upon the throne and bullied his wife, and when his meek spouse Mary determined to have her ladies painted, she was at least saved the indignity of causing the faces of the women who made her most unhappy to live for all time. In her gallery the depraved Villiers sisters do not appear, nor is there a single lady in whom the King showed an interest too great for her soul’s health. Indeed, though William was by no means impeccable, he was so far restrained that the lampooners of his day had nothing to say about his amorous sins. They crystallized the character of the Court in very different sentiments.

“ There’s Mary the daughter, there’s Willie the cheater,
There’s Geordie the drinker, there’s Annie the eater,”

is an example of the wit of the day, while another verse might have served for the original of Jack Sprat :

“Man and wife are all one, in flesh and in bone,
From hence you may guess what they mean,
The Queen drinks chocolat to make the King fat,
The King hunts to make the Queen lean.”

Thus the gossips were concerned rather with the faults which affected principally the Royal pair both in their exercise and results than with those vices which acted widely upon all around them, so the names of the Beauties of Hampton Court will perhaps raise more curiosity than interest, for, indeed, they have been treated with too much indifference to be quite pleasant to one who would now seek to piece together their stories.

Who is Miss Pitt ? What Mr. Scrope did she marry ? Diarists, satirists, memoirists, historians, lampooners, all are silent. Not one has written her name, not one has praised or slighted her. Even the omniscient Burke ignores her, and yet if she were about the Queen’s person she must have belonged to a family which is chronicled in his pages. There was a Mary Scrope who married John Pitt, great-uncle to the great William of eighteenth - century fame, who must have lived in the time of William and Mary. Can it be possible that a mistake was made in the labelling of the picture which used to be designated *Mrs. Pitt*, afterwards *Mrs. Scrope* ? At that time *Miss* was regarded as an infamous title, and all the maids of honour were spoken of as “*Mrs.*” Perhaps it should in reality have been *Miss Scrope*, afterwards *Mrs. Pitt* ; for there have been many mistakes made

over these pictures. Lady Belasyse, for example, was long known as Lady Byron ; Lady Falmouth was labelled Lady Orrery ; and Frances Brooke has been mistaken for Lady Southesk ; while Margaret Brooke is called to this day Elizabeth Brooke—so it may well be that there was some transposition of the names of Scrope and Pitt.

On the other hand, this Miss Pitt may have been Dorothy, sister to the old adventurous Thomas Pitt, the Governor of Fort St. George, the “Diamond” Pitt who ought to have made a huge fortune over the buying and selling of the great stone known as the Regent Diamond, but who never received more than the first instalment of his price. Whoever she was, sweet, youthful Miss or Mrs. Pitt, in her pink dress, posed in Kneller’s conventional fashion with arm outstretched, must go undescribed, and so she has the first place in this book, for she alone of the Beauties remains a mystery. There may be some one possessing the secret of her identity, but for my purpose the secret has proved elusive.

A word as to the painters. Sir Peter Lely was most certainly the best painter of his time, a statement which a comparison of the pictures to-day proves. His colours are still bright, while those of Kneller have toned into dullness ; his faces are expressive, we may call them sleepy, or find an unusual resemblance among them, yet they give the idea of life and animation ; his backgrounds are beautiful, and he had the daring to throw draperies around his figures which fitted in with his conception of the picture as a whole rather than hung as useful clothes

upon the fair dame—"a night-gown fastened with a single pin," to quote Lady Mary Wortley Montagu: only it is necessary to remember that night-gown in Charles's days meant what we now call evening dress; a night-rail was the sleeping garment. As Horace Walpole says: "Lely's women are certainly much handsomer than those of Vandyck. They please as much more as they are evidently meant to please. . . . I don't know whether even in softness of the flesh he did not exceed his predecessor. The beauties at Windsor are the Court of Paphos, and ought to be engraved for the memoirs of its charming historiographer, Count Hamilton" (who wrote the *Memoirs of Count Gramont*).

Lely sometimes copied, or had copied, his own pictures, altering only the face to make it suit another person. Lady Southesk at Narbonne and Frances Brooke at Hampton Court are examples of this; also Ann Kellaway, a plain woman of mature age, is sometimes erroneously dubbed Princess Mary, though the latter picture is of a slight pretty child of about fourteen, which has caused some curious mistakes among those writing about the pictures.

As for origin; Lely ought to have been named Vander Vaas, but his father, being born at the Hague in a perfumer's shop known as The Lily, was generally called Captain du Lys, and he gave his son the name, which in England was variously spelled Lily, Lillie, Lely, and probably in other ways. He came to England in 1641 or 1643, and painted innumerable portraits until 1680, when he died suddenly of apoplexy. He was extremely vain and very luxurious. Pepys tells of visiting him and noting the wonder-

ful state in which the painter's dinner-table was laid.

Sir Godfrey Kneller's fame did not arise in England until after 1670, but he had plenty of time in which to awaken the jealousy of Lely, and in which to do much work that the older painter regarded as legitimately his. However, there was such a passion for portraits at that time that there was more than room for both of them, and Lely was noble enough to extol the abilities of his rival. Kneller was knighted by William in 1692 as a reward for his pictures of the Beauties, though it is not certain that he had actually finished all the portraits by that date.

He was precise as to style, careless as to work, avaricious for money. The fashion of head-dress in his day took the form of an extraordinary three-story erection of lace rising straight up from the head, with ends falling on each side to rest on the shoulders. Kneller induced his sitters to discard these atrocities and painted their faces surrounded with something more natural as an adornment. He preferred interiors to the woodland background, and clothed his ladies in long, decorous, stately robes. He worked with extraordinary rapidity, and was sometimes so hurried that he would occasionally leave a corner of his canvas entirely untouched, a carelessness which was assiduously copied by his pupils.

If Lely was vain, there seems to be no word adequate to describe Kneller's high appreciation of himself, but he may be forgiven it for the wit which he possessed. He was also the easiest person in the world to flatter, so easy that it is said Pope once laid a

wager that there was no flattery so gross that Kneller would not accept it. To prove it he remarked one day :

“ Sir Godfrey, I believe if God Almighty had had your assistance the world would have been made more perfect.”

To which Kneller replied emphatically :

“ ’Fore God, sir, I believe so.”

One day Kneller heard a man cursing himself and said :

“ God damn *you* ? God may damn the Duke of Marlborough, and perhaps Sir Godfrey Kneller ; but do you think he will take the trouble of damning such a scoundrel as you ? ”

He allowed his neighbour, Dr. Ratcliffe, to make a door in his garden which divided the two houses, but when he found that Ratcliffe’s servants destroyed his flowers, he sent word to the doctor that the door must be fastened up. “ Tell him he may do anything with it but paint it,” was the snappy answer ; to which Kneller sent the reply : “ And I can take anything from *him* but physic.” A tailor who once asked him to train his son as an artist received the reply : “ Dost thou think, man, I can make thy son a painter ? No ! God Almighty only makes painters.”

Kneller amassed a great fortune and died in 1723, being buried at Whitton, in Middlesex, though a monument was raised to him in Westminster Abbey.

Verelst, whose portrait of the Duchess of Portsmouth hangs in the Beauty Room, was a Dutch painter of flowers, egged on by the Duke of Buckingham to

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become a portrait painter. His first attempts in that direction were so crowded with flowers that the real subject of the picture could scarcely be seen ; however, he became popular in time, and helped to send Lely into retirement at Kew.

CHAPTER II

ANNE HYDE, DUCHESS OF YORK

“A Prince like a pear, which rotten at core is,
With a court that takes millions, and yet as Job poor is.”
Old Song.

ANNE HYDE, Duchess of York, has never been popular or remarkable among historical characters. The fact that she was not of royal blood has probably been sufficient to decrease her importance, and the further fact that she showed no interest in political intrigue, and was content with ordering her own house, has put her among those princesses of whom we know little more than the name. Her picture, however, hangs among the Beauties of Charles’s Court, for she was painted many times by various artists, and as she gave the master portrait-painter his commission to produce for her a series of the handsomest women about the Court, it is but fitting that she should stand first in this history of the originals of those pictures.

Anne was the daughter of Edward Hyde, a commoner of good family, who was called to the Bar in 1633, and who, all through the Civil War, did his utmost to induce his sovereign to follow a strictly legal course in his quarrels with Parliament. This advice was often diametrically opposed to that of the

Queen, for which reason Henrietta Maria soon took a violent dislike to him, a dislike which later she felt just as keenly for his daughter. Hyde was knighted in 1643 and appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer. During the exile of the young Charles he was his chief adviser, being always anxious not only to see him crowned as king, but to save monarchy in England. His constant advice was, "Have a little patience!" for restoration without bloodshed was his aim; an advice and aim which were both fully justified. On the return of Charles to England Hyde was made Baron Hyde of Hindon, and at the coronation he became Viscount Cornbury and Earl of Clarendon.

Anne, who was born in 1637, was his eldest daughter, and she, with all the family, fled to Antwerp in 1649. Four years later the Princess Royal of England, the Princess of Orange, gave the Hydes a residence at Breda, and in a few months made Anne one of her maids of honour, thus much annoying Queen Henrietta Maria and drawing a very reluctant consent from Edward Hyde. The appointment, however, gave great pleasure to the lively Queen of Bohemia, aunt to the Princess, who openly wrote and spoke of Anne as her favourite. "Tell Mr. Chancellor his lady and my favourite came hither Saturday and are gone this day to Teyling [the Princess's country house]. I find my favourite from every way to her advantage." She also says how very fit she thinks Anne is to fill the post of maid of honour. While at Teyling Anne was present at a fancy ball in the character of a shepherdess, and in her soft girlishness of sweet seventeen looked very pretty, the general opinion being that, excepting the Princess, she was the handsomest woman present.



ANNE HYDE, DUCHESS OF YORK

(*After Lely*)

[TO FACE PAGE 28]

At this time Miss Hyde, or, as the custom of the day was, Mrs. Hyde, had many admirers. Charles himself paid her attention, though it never entered his head that she could become a member of his family. She was the prettiest and liveliest girl in the Princess's household, and every man acknowledged the fact. Sir Spencer Compton was passionately in love with her, so much so that it was the gossip of the whole circle. This young man was the son of the Earl of Northampton, and was said to be of so brave a nature that when only a child, incapable of grasping a pistol, he cried with indignation that he was not allowed to share in his brother's dangers. Charles and others were discussing his affection for Anne one day when Charles said :

" Well, I will see whether Sir Spencer is so much in love as you say ; I will speak of Mrs. Hyde before him as if by chance, and unless he be very much smitten he will not be at all moved by it."

Charles Berkeley, later Lord Falmouth and husband of another Beauty, the terrible little Henry Jermyn, the Earl of Arran, Talbot, and Thomas Killigrew, all flitted around her, ready enough to pass some time of their exile in flirting with the Chancellor's daughter. It is impossible to say whether these were especially bad men, or whether the standard of morals and honour was so extremely low that bad actions seemed good to them, or whether, on the other hand, they considered that any means justified the end ; but a few years later these five men did their utmost to ruin Anne, and for a time it seemed as though their plot would succeed.

Early in 1656 Anne went with the Princess of

Orange to visit Henrietta Maria in Paris, and there she met the Duke of York, who was then twenty-two and “full of reputation and honour” from the two campaigns he had served in against the Spaniards. It is not unlikely that the young people fell in love with each other at that time, but if so they had to separate when the visit ended, and they did not again meet for a long while. On hearing of the death of Oliver Cromwell, James withdrew from the army and went to Brussels and Breda to be near Charles, and at the latter place he again met Anne. It was in November, 1659, that he entered into some sort of contract with her, which, while not really a marriage, at least gave James, in his own opinion, all the rights of marriage. Gramont says that this marriage “was deficient in none of those circumstances which render contracts of this nature valid in the eye of Heaven : the mutual inclination, the formal ceremony, witnesses, and every essential point of matrimony had been observed.”

The Duke was very much in love, and at first had no thought of repentance, so that it may be certain that for six months at least Anne was perfectly happy, a state of blessedness which probably she never again reached. For in May, 1660, James accompanied Charles back to England, and both were surrounded with the glory and power which a crown can confer. Then came the time for repentance. The love of such men as Charles and his brother was not exactly an exalted sentiment, and it often died when novelty had gone. So James reflected that he stood very near the throne ; and as he looked upon the women who came to Court, he saw that if it were true that he had married

the handsomest woman at Breda, there were many handsomer still to be found in London. From that it was a short step to doubting whether he was married at all.

He thought with horror of confessing his act to Charles, who had already on more than one occasion shown him how strongly he could resent any action of which he disapproved ; he pictured a sort of universal indignation when he made his news public, and at last he virtuously came to the conclusion that his contract was an infringement of the duty and obedience he owed the King. But for one circumstance he might have found in these arguments a sufficient reason for repudiating his agreement with Anne, and that circumstance was that she was expecting soon to become a mother. She used all the entreaties that any other woman would have used to keep him faithful to her, and James was torn between his desire to be free and his desire not to be brutal to a girl whom he had a few months earlier bound to him by most solemn promises. Pepys, who was the most accomplished gossip London ever produced, and who always either heard more than other chroniclers or invented a little to embellish his tale, says that Anne affirmed “ that for certain James did promise her marriage and had signed it with his blood, but that he by stealth had got the paper out of her cabinet.”

His mind veering this way and that, James at last consulted with his friends as to what course he should pursue. The first person he went to was Sir Charles Berkeley, who scoffed at the idea of there being anything binding in the contract of marriage, saying that a man in his position could not legally

marry without first having the King's consent ; and that it was a jest to suppose that the King's heir could be wedded to the daughter of an insignificant lawyer, who, though given a peerage, was not even of noble blood. As for his tenderness of heart towards the lady, he could soon rid himself of that if he would but listen to what a few men of the Court could tell him about Anne.

This raised James's curiosity, and also promised a probable settlement of his doubts ; he therefore said he would meet these courtiers and hear what they could tell him. So Berkeley called together Arran, Jermyn, Talbot, and Killigrew, "all men of honour," and gave them some instructions ; he then introduced them to the Duke's presence, and the latter in a somewhat shamefaced way explained the situation, adding that as the innocence of girls at her age was exposed to Court scandal, and as certain reports true or false were circulating as to her conduct, he trusted that being his friends they would tell him all that they knew, as he intended to judge in this affair according to the evidence they gave.

At first these honourable gentlemen hesitated and seemed afraid to answer the noble Duke ; then one, the Earl of Arran, related some flirtatious incident, and each man followed with his own particular story. Killigrew was the last, and in his eagerness to go one better than his companions he coloured his really abominable story too highly, and James knew that what he said was false. However, he thanked his friends for their frankness, enjoined silence upon them, and went immediately to seek the King.

James had really been afraid to tell his brother

of his entanglement, but now he felt that there was no escape, and that he would have to do whatever Charles decided. It is said that he was really biased by the disgusting concoctions of the loose men who knew as little of principle as they did of love ; and Anne was for weeks left in torment. Gramont, who dictated his memoirs many years later, would make us believe that the whole affair was settled in a day. But that was not so. One likes to believe, though, that what the genial Frenchman said about Berkeley was true—that when he saw the Duke of York returning from his interview with the King, looking extremely grave and distressed, he wished that he had kept clear of the whole matter, and from sympathizing with the Duke fell to pitying “poor Mrs. Hyde” and commiserating her disappointment.

Charles was furious at the news, and at first seemed to think the marriage an impossibility, but Clarendon was a valued counsellor and friend, and he could not bring disgrace upon him. Anne had not come over to England with her father, but remained in her post as maid to the Princess ; and Clarendon began to think that it was time his daughter was settled down with a husband ; so he sought out a suitable match, and then sent for his daughter to come home. This naturally pressed events forward. Anne could not long hide the perplexity she was in, and her near presence altered the aspect of affairs for James. A masterly inactivity no longer met the case. The really surprising thing in this romance was that Charles, whatever his first feeling, upheld Anne’s claim. He turned at once to Clarendon for advice, and sent some intimate

friend of the Chancellor to break the intelligence to him.

Clarendon was struck to the heart by what he now heard ; he regarded his daughter's action as treasonable, advised that she should be sent to the Tower, and that an Act of Parliament—which he himself would propose—should be passed to cut off her head. On seeing the King he repeated this advice. He was actuated by many motives : anger against his daughter, whose story of marriage he regarded as a pure fiction ; fear for himself, for Charles was unmarried, and if he died without children Clarendon himself would be the father of a queen, a position which he believed would be intolerable to the nation ; and he further had real respect for the Monarchy, which made the position intolerable to himself. His very excess of anger calmed any irritation remaining in the King's mind, and helped to smooth matters for Anne. But of all people Henrietta Maria was the most vehement in her wrath, protesting that if Anne were brought to Whitehall she would never enter it again.

The actual marriage ceremony, for James was not proof against Anne's entreaties, took place in secret in Worcester House, at midnight, on September 3rd, 1660, and on October 22nd a son was born. The Duke, still influenced by Berkeley's fabrications, though more or less disbelieving them, was even then in two minds about acknowledging his wife ; but Charles's complaisance and the sudden withdrawal of the Queen-mother's objections had an effect upon him. Pepys says that the Queen was bought by great offers on Clarendon's part to befriend her

and help her to pay off her debts, the Chancellor undertaking to have the settlement of her affairs go through his hands. Burnet says that the change was caused by a message to her from Cardinal Mazarin, representing the French ministry, intimating that they would be better pleased if she would be reconciled to her two sons and to those whom they most trusted.

Anne protested stoutly that she was the Duke's wife, and she would have that known, let him use her as he would. The gossip and scandal was unending, people taking sides as to the Duke's probable action, and no one knowing that an actual marriage had been solemnized. Then one day James called upon Sir Charles Berkeley and the Earl of Ossory to meet him at Worcester House. With feelings of considerable discomfort the two "men of honour" repaired to the appointed place, thinking that at last they would be called upon to prove their words and witness the agony of which they would have been partly the cause. They found the Duke in Mrs. Hyde's room ; she pale and troubled, tears which she tried to restrain slowly running down her face. The Chancellor was there too, leaning against a wall with a very disturbed air, no doubt, as Berkeley thought, filled with rage. Then the Duke turned to them "with that serene and pleasant countenance with which men announce good news," and said, "As you are the two men of the Court whom I most esteem, I am desirous you should first have the honour of paying your compliments to the Duchess of York ; there she is."

The two men were astounded, but they dared not show it ; and the only thing they could think of to

hide their emotion was to drop upon their knees and kiss the Duchess's hand, which she gave them with as much majesty as though she had been used to it all her life. The next day, towards the end of December, the marriage was publicly owned, and the whole Court showed an eager desire to pay Anne respect. It is possible that Anne's tears before this interview may have been caused by the realization that James still accepted as his close friends men who had slandered her so vilely ; but whatever her feelings, she showed no resentment towards them, her one fling at them being "that nothing was a greater proof of the attachment of a man of honour than his being more solicitous for the interest of his friend or master than for his own reputation."

Sir Charles Berkeley had the grace to tell James that the stories he and the others had repeated about Anne were mere fabrications, invented to save James from the consequence of his own actions. On New Year's Day Henrietta received her son and his wife with "much respect and love" ; and on May 6th, 1661, ended this painful episode in the life of the Duchess of York with the death of the little son,—a death which more or less pleased everybody ; even the Duke and his wife were said not to be much troubled by it, for in future years there might be some question as to his legitimacy.

Anne had many good qualities ; she was said to be a keen business woman, though her desire to keep her husband within reasonable limits of expenditure did not prevent her from demanding a large income for her own personal expenses. She encouraged art and literature, having a literary talent herself, for

she began to write an account of James's career, founded upon his journals ; and it is said that this fragmentary evidence of his life and intentions was the treasure within the casket which he was so anxious to take away with him in his flight from England. The Duchess was, however, very jealous, and had many opportunities to exercise that jealousy, for James was quite as licentious as his brother, though his amours, being of less importance, attracted less public attention.

As soon as he had more or less satisfactorily settled his matrimonial troubles, he looked upon the fair wives and sisters of his friends, scarcely regretting that many were more handsome than the handsomest of his dead sister's maids of honour (for the Princess of Orange had died of smallpox in December, 1660). The first woman to whom he paid particular attention was Lady Carnegie, who was " tolerably handsome " and " naturally inclined to tenderness." The lady's husband promptly interposed and induced the Duke to look elsewhere. Then Margaret Brooke, of whom there is more to tell later, caught his fancy, but Lady Chesterfield had a mind to rob the girl of her conquest, and made the " most extravagant advances to the Duke, who, being the most unguarded ogler of his time, quickly betrayed to the whole Court what was going on." This was more than Anne could put up with. She scolded her husband, complained to her father, and at last spoke bitterly to the King of the way in which James treated her. It made such a hubbub that Lord Chesterfield knew a great deal more about the matter than his wife either told him or wished him to know, so that though it was in the

depth of the winter he whisked her off into the country and never let her return to London.

In the meantime Miss Brooke married Sir John Denham, a man considerably older than herself, and promised James all sorts of favours if he would get her made one of Anne's ladies. Anne was furious at the suggestion, and indignantly refused to accede to such a request. James insisted, and Anne persisted in her refusal, and then, to the horror of every one, Lady Denham was taken violently ill. Poison, said some, and poison cried the victim, who, however, was ill for two months before she died. There were those who believed Anne had accomplished her rival's death, and some one affixed to the door of her palace a lampoon charging her with the crime.

James had the reputation for admiring women for their wit rather than their beauty, thus provoking the remark from Charles that his brother's mistresses were chosen for him by the priests as a penance, a *mot* which was not so good as that by the Duke of Buckingham upon the intelligence of the two brothers, that "Charles could if he would, but James would if he could." However, the Duke's fancy roved lightly to Elizabeth Hamilton, to Frances Jennings, and to a few other ladies connected either with the Queen's or the Duchess's households, until Anne grew thoroughly tired with his intrigues.

The Duchess did not bear all this without remonstrance, and Charles, who was at the time diligently playing the part of tame cat to his shrewish mistress, Lady Castlemaine, used to joke about his brother as a henpecked man. One day, after some new disturbance, he remarked that he really could

not be troubled with this Tom Otter and his wife.

“Sire, pray which is best for a man, to be Tom Otter to his wife or to his mistress?” asked Thomas Killigrew, Tom Otter being a henpecked husband in a play.

James was more or less afraid of Anne’s tongue, and so he suppressed his irritation at her interference as much as he possibly could. If only his wife were not so correct in her own life, if she would but give him cause to retaliate upon her! But there seemed no hope of that, and he tried to pretend that it was the merest gallantry which actuated him. The opportunity was long in coming; meanwhile he amused himself with falling in love with Arabella Churchill, sister to Jack Churchill, the celebrated Duke of Marlborough. She was one of Anne’s maids of honour, and Gramont describes her as “a tall creature, pale-faced, and nothing but skin and bone. . . . The Court was not able to comprehend how, after having been in love with Lady Chesterfield, Miss Hamilton, and Miss Jennings, he could have had any inclination for such a creature.” To the Duchess’s jealousy this time was added the bitterest indignation that her husband should admire a woman whose want of beauty seemed to debase her own merit in his eyes, and while she was in this state of rage she began to notice Henry Sidney, the youngest son of the Earl of Leicester, who was remarkably handsome, dressed well, and considered himself one of the most desirable men alive. The observant Gramont says of him on one occasion: “Sidney, more handsome than the beautiful Adonis, and dressed more gay than usual, alighted just then from his coach: Miss Price went boldly up to him

as he was adjusting his curls ; but he was too much occupied with his own dear self to attend to anything else, and so passed on without deigning to give her an answer."

There is no doubt but that Anne admired him, as did every one else ; whether she admitted him to any close friendship it is difficult to say. Bishop Burnet says that he was a very graceful young man of quality, whose services were so acceptable that she was thought to look at him in a particular manner. Gramont talks of " perfidious Cupid," adding that Sidney's " eyes rashly answered everything which those of Her Royal Highness had the kindness to tell him."

If Anne did accept Sidney as a lover it must be remembered that she was only twenty-seven, a slighted wife, whose spirit was rampant with anger and jealousy against her husband. However it was, the matter was not observed by James for some time, indeed, at Anne's request, he made Sidney master of her horse, which post gave opportunity for constant intercourse between the Duchess and Sidney.

The whole Court seemed at this time to be engaged in love-making of a doubtful kind. Lady Castlemaine was encouraging Henry Jermyn, nephew of Lord St. Albans, who was said to have married Henrietta Maria ; and it was reported that the Duke, already tiring of the plain Arabella, was casting his eyes upon the pretty Frances Stuart, much to the King's anger. So factions ran high, and every one was in a state of excitement.

Then some kind friend whispered to James that it would be as well if he watched the Duchess's chief equerry, and James's suspicions being aroused, he

did watch, and saw enough, either to justify him in the greatest resentment, or to give him the opportunity of once and for all shaking off his wife's restraining influence. There was a tremendous row in which both Anne and James told each other many emphatic things, and when the first excitement was over James balanced his unusual flow of words by not speaking again to his wife for many days. Sidney, of course, was banished from Court, and to all outward appearance the episode ended, though in reality it led to very important results. Hitherto, as I have said, the Duke had been at the pains of masking his intrigues and at least of publicly showing deference to the wishes of his wife. Now being, or pretending to be, jealous of her, he threw off all restraint in his own intrigues ; and the Duchess, finding that she had lost her hold upon him, tried to regain it by accepting his religious views. To this end she appointed certain hours for the Catholic priest to visit her, and before long secretly owned herself to be a Roman Catholic.

Anne was never popular. Her pride was the talk of the Court, and offended all those about her ; so that there were always plenty of people ready to make mischief. The next murmur against her was that while spending everything she wished herself, she held her husband's purse-strings too tightly ; and some of the Court intriguers tried to damage her in Charles's eyes by saying that the Duke was entirely ruled by his wife. As the financial affairs of James were in a terribly embarrassed condition, this caused the blame to fall upon Anne, and a small committee was formed to examine their accounts, with the result that the Yorks were proved to be spending £20,000 annually

above their income. The Duchess did not limit her supervision to her household accounts, for she seemed to have been in the habit of attending her husband's Council for his household. A certain Mr. Povey, who, in consideration of giving up some place, was awarded a pension of £400 a year by the Duke, told Pepys one day that he was likely to lose his pension, for the Duchess was a very devil against him, and came, like Queen Elizabeth, to sit with the Duke's Council and see what they did ; “ and she crosses out this man's wages and prices, as she sees fit, for saving money ; but yet she reserves £5000 a year for her own spending,” and lays up jewels.

In 1667 Clarendon fell from power, was cast upon his back with no chance of rising again, as one writer has it—a circumstance which should have made, and perhaps did make, Anne mournful. Clarendon himself had always believed that his daughter's high marriage must mean his own ruin, and there is no doubt but that it added largely to the jealousy which was felt against him. Yet when he wrote to her from his painful exile in France, that she would use her influence on his behalf, his letters remained unanswered.

Of the eight children Anne bore only two survived, and it must have been a grief to her to see all her four sons die. She had little comfort in her husband or his friends, and could never again have been so happy as during the few months after her first marriage with James. Yet she had one real pleasure left her, and that was the table. She is said by a contemporary to have been one of “ the highest feeders in England,” and to have recompensed herself in this way for other enforced self-denials. “ It was really an edifying sight

to see her at table. The Duke, on the contrary, being incessantly in the hurry of new fancies, exhausted himself by his inconstancy, and was gradually wasting away, while the poor Princess, gratifying her good appetite, grew so plump and fat that it was a blessing to see her ! ” So says Gramont, and Pepys, when speaking of kissing her hand, adds, “ and it was a fine, white, plump hand.”

Anne was only thirty-four when she died. Most historians give no name to the bad health from which she suffered, though one of them is only too explicit. “ A long decay of health came at last to a quicker crisis than had been apprehended. All of a sudden she fell into the agony of death,” which is perhaps description enough. Poor Anne ! she paid dearly for the indiscreet love of her youth in watching six feeble diseased children die, and in dying herself while still a young woman ; but, like the child who suffered pain through overmuch eating of green apples, she may, when remembering the position she had gained, have said, “ It was worth it ! ”

In one way her death made a great stir, for she died a Catholic, though she had never acknowledged her change of faith. Feeling sure that she had a very short time to live, she begged her husband not to leave her alone until she was dead, adding that if Dr. Blandford came he was to be told the truth. She evidently felt the need of protection, and Queen Catherine joined with the Duke in watching over the dying woman. When Blandford, afterwards Bishop of Worcester, did come, he found the Queen there, and in deference to her and her opinions he had not sufficient presence of mind to begin his prayers,

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so he waited, hoping for Catherine's departure. But the Queen sat on, and Blandford got no further than expressing a hope that Anne continued in the truth. Upon which she asked, "What is truth?" and her pain increasing, she repeated often, "Truth, truth," and in a few minutes died, not much lamented and not much loved by any.

Lely painted her picture several times, Pepys telling how one day he walked to the artist's studio, where he saw, among other rare things, "the Duchess of York, her whole body, sitting in state in a chair, in white satin."

CHAPTER III

BARBARA VILLIERS

“We are much indebted to the memory of Barbara, Duchess of Cleveland ; Louisa, Duchess of Portsmouth ; and Mrs. Eleanor Gwyn. We owe a tribute of gratitude to the Mays, the Killigrews, the Chiffinches, and the Gramonts. They played a serviceable part in ridding the kingdom of its besotted loyalty. They saved our forefathers from the star-chamber and the high commission court ; they laboured in their vocation against standing armies and corruption ; they pressed forward the great ultimate security of English freedom, the expulsion of the house of Stuart.”—*Hallam.*

KING CHARLES’s good resolutions did not last long, as has been said, and as Mrs. Barbara Palmer attracted his notice before he was king, and accepted his attentions from the moment that he entered London, she may well have one of the foremost places in our gallery.

Barbara’s maiden name was Villiers, she being the daughter of William Villiers, Viscount Grandison, who, at the commencement of the Civil War, received a commission as Colonel-General to raise a regiment for Charles I. In July, 1643, the gallant Colonel was mortally wounded at the siege of Bristol, leaving his little daughter, who was not quite three years old at the time, to the care of her mother Mary, the daughter of the first Viscount Bayning. Scandal attacked the child even over her birth, for in *The Secret History of Charles II* it is asserted as a well-known fact that Barbara was the daughter of Henrietta Maria and the

Earl of St. Albans, and therefore half-sister to Charles. For this story there seems to be no foundation, though Barbara's most important biographer, G. S. Steinman, says that a daughter of this secret marriage was born abroad. The statement could only be true on the assumption that Viscount Grandison had connived at hiding the child's birth and had adopted her as his own, and there is no proof of this. Clarendon says of him that he was a man of so virtuous a habit of mind that no temptation could corrupt him, a lover of justice and integrity, of rare piety and devotion. Of Lady Grandison little is known beyond the fact that she married again in 1648, her second husband being of the same family as her first, for he was Charles Villiers, the second Earl of Anglesey. It is in his house in London that we first hear of Barbara, then a girl of sixteen.

In those days of extremely early marriages it is a little surprising that Barbara Villiers, heiress to her father's estates, remained without a husband until she was eighteen. She was a striking, well-developed girl, and was twitted then for her black eyes and round baby face. In actual fact her eyes were blue, that dark blue which under emotion seems black, and her luxuriant hair was auburn. Her lips were too full for real beauty, though in Charles's day a voluptuous fulness may have been thought more admirable than a delicate curve. Her vivacious manner and her boldness soon drew admirers to the house of her step-father, and the girl, who to-day would have been at school, had her time filled with the endeavour to keep them all around her, to play one off against the other, and to get every possible atom of amuse-



BARBARA VILLIERS, DUCHESS OF CLEVELAND, AS MINERVA

(*After Lely*)

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ment that she could secure from their rivalry and proffers of love. Gradually, however, she began to give preference to one of them, the Earl of Chesterfield, who was a widower though only five years older than herself, and who has been described as having “a very agreeable countenance, a fine head of hair, an indifferent figure and a worse air; he was not, however, deficient in wit.” In character Chesterfield was a rake, and his attentions to Barbara were neither platonic nor innocent of guile, while the girl willingly made assignations with him. In one of her letters to him she says that she and her friend Lady Anne Hamilton are in bed together cogitating how and where to meet him during the afternoon, adding that if he deserves that favour he will look for them in Butler’s shop on Ludgate Hill at about three o’clock.

From another letter we learn that Barbara hopes “the fates may yet be so kind as to let me see you about five o’clock; and if you will be at your private lodgings in Lincoln’s Inn Fields I will endeavour to come.” She further speaks of doing nothing but dream of him, and her life being never pleasant but when talking to him or of him.

Yet at this very time Chesterfield’s banns were being asked in the church of St. Martin’s-in-the-Fields, the prospective bride being Mary Fairfax, daughter and heiress of Thomas Lord Fairfax, one of Cromwell’s chief supporters. After the banns had been published, some say two, others three times, Barbara’s cousin, the irresponsible Buckingham, another Villiers, who was

“Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong,
Was everything by starts, and nothing long,”

danced upon the scene, captured the fancy of Mary, and carried her off to a life perhaps a little worse than she would have had with Chesterfield.

There was certainly something wrong with the Villiers, for when Roger Palmer, a clever young man who was studying for the Bar, desired to marry Barbara, his father was strongly against the match ; but Palmer was bent on his own undoing, and the marriage took place in 1659. Barbara had neither love for her husband nor any respect for his attainments, which were considerable, and she soon continued her correspondence with Chesterfield, nick-naming her husband “ Mounseer ” and complaining of his jealousy ; saying that she was ready to go all over the world with Chesterfield and would obey his commands while she lived.

She had an attack of smallpox a few months after her marriage, which did not, however, spoil her beauty, and it was probably during that illness she wrote as follows to her lover :

“ My Dear Life,—I have been this day extremely ill, and the not hearing from you hath made me much worse than otherwayes I should have been. The doctor doth believe me in a desperate condition, and I must confess that the unwillingness I have to leave you makes me not entertaine the thoughts of death so willingly as otherwise I should ; for there is nothing besides yourself that could make me desire to live a day ; and if I am never so happy as to see you more, yet the last words I will say shall be a prayer for your happiness, and so I will live and die loving you above all other things.”

There can be very little doubt but that Barbara

was really in love with the Earl, for her letters show a meekness of spirit which animated none of her later actions ; and it is possible that the light estimate in which he held her—shown by his projected marriage while engaged in seeking her favour, and by his later coldness—was responsible for the definite character which this woman developed. Roger Palmer was both clever and amiable, and perhaps he let his reason control his emotion to an exceptional degree ; however, before his jealousy took active form Chesterfield had killed a man in a duel and had to fly the country.

Where Charles II first met Barbara Palmer is not known. Mrs. Jameson, the only writer who has given a detailed account of the Windsor Beauties, and who wrote three-quarters of a century ago, says that it was in Holland, in 1659 ; but Charles was in Brussels all that year. It is more likely that Roger Palmer, who was an ardent Royalist, went out with other enthusiasts to show his loyalty to the King, and took his wife with him. They probably came back with Charles. In any case it seems fairly certain that they met before the King's return to his own country, for, Sultan though he was, it is scarcely possible to believe that Charles threw the handkerchief on the day of his return to a woman whom he had never seen before. While abroad many were the fair dames who succumbed to his ardent love-making—Lady Byron was the seventeenth, it is said—and if the Palmers really went to meet him in Brussels it is easy to understand the beginning of a connection which lasted for at least ten years.

Certain it is that when on his birthday, May 29th, 1660, Charles had passed along flower-strewn roads

crowded with cheering Englishmen, had seen his soldiers kiss the hilts of their swords before flourishing them in the air with shouts of loyalty, had traversed streets hung with tapestry, silks, and velvet, had knighted the Lord Mayor and the aldermen, had listened to interminable addresses, and had at last, to the roar of cannon, been deposited safely in Whitehall, making his famous remark that surely it had been only his own fault that he had stayed so long away, as every one seemed unanimous in promoting his return—certain it is that then he allowed himself some relaxation in courting Madame Palmer. Mrs. Jameson tells us that he wended his way through bonfire-lit streets to the house of Sir Samuel Morland at Vauxhall, where Mistress Palmer was staying, remaining there the night; but this is not according to facts. Samuel Morland did not lease his house until five years later, so Barbara could not have stayed there; while contemporary authorities state that Charles did not leave the palace that night, that, indeed, the assignation took place in Whitehall itself.

In February, 1661, Barbara's first child was born, and was named Anne, being acknowledged as daughter both by Charles II and by Roger Palmer,—though generally believed to be the child of Lord Chesterfield.

The Palmers settled down in a house in King Street, Westminster, Roger having been elected Member of Parliament for Windsor. It was very close to the house of the Earl of Sandwich, to whom Pepys was secretary, and thus we get from the diarist various little glimpses of his “dear Lady Castlemaine.” One evening the King and his brothers were at a concert

at the Palmers', and Pepys, with Lord Sandwich, stood long at the door listening to it. At another time, when walking in his Lord's garden, he says: "I saw in the Privy garden the finest smocks and linen petticoats of my Lady Castlemaine's, laced with rich lace at the bottom, that ever I saw, and did me good to look at them." Once in the chapel at Whitehall Pepys tells how Barbara and the Duke of York ogled each other; and indeed she is not free from a suspicion of allowing James as well as his brother to make love to her.

Barbara's fame grew as the months passed. At first she was but a pretty woman for whom the King and the Duke of York had what might prove a passing fancy; when the title of Countess of Castlemaine was conferred upon her she became more important in the public eye. Pepys' admiration was in direct ratio to her reputation and her favour with the King. "I sat before Mrs. Palmer, the King's mistress, and filled my eyes with her, which much pleased me"; again, at the theatre, he notes that it was a "great pleasure to see so many great beauties, but above all, Mrs. Palmer, with whom the King do discover a great deal of familiarity; indeed, I can never enough admire her beauty."

The suggested marriage of the King filled Barbara's mind with turmoil, and she used her tongue freely to him and to all others who mentioned the matter before her. For she was by no means a meek lover now! It was said that she found a violent, masterful temper the best weapon to use. To pacify her the King raised Roger Palmer to the peerage with the Irish title of Earl of Castlemaine, the title to descend

only to children born of Barbara. Palmer, who at last understood the situation, was so disgusted that the honour had to be forced upon him, but he never took his seat in the House of Lords.

By this time the character of Charles's Court had declared itself ; its emulation, its poverty, and its vices of drinking, swearing, and loose amours causing much gossip and speculation. There were factions too among the courtiers about Mrs. Palmer, probably concerning the continuance of the King's favour on the arrival of the Queen ; factions which became so fierce that Barbara's cousin Mary, Duchess of Richmond, sister to the Duke of Buckingham, called her publicly a Jane Shore, and hoped she would come to the same bad end ; a matter which much offended the King. Lady Castlemaine even went so far as to declare that the second child which she was expecting at about the time that Catherine of Braganza was to arrive should be born at Hampton Court ; but the King had too much decency to allow this.

Catherine's ship anchored off Portsmouth on May 13th, 1662, and Lady Castlemaine revenged herself slightly for the coldness which was generally shown her at this time by keeping her house dark and allowing no bonfire to be lit before her door. The King had dined and supped every day for a week with the mistress whose reign was now so much endangered, and on the 13th, when all the world was in the streets rejoicing, he was at her house in King Street. Like children, the two sent for a pair of scales and weighed each other, she being the heavier, it is said, because of her condition.

Brave it out as she would, however, Barbara was

at that time a disconsolate creature. From the beginning of May until the beginning of June, when her second child was born, she did not go out of her house. She could not bear the coldness of those who had at least professed friendship for her, nor the averted looks of the public. Her child, named Charles Fitzroy, was born in her husband's house in King Street, and soon arose the excuse which Barbara wanted altering her way of life. Roger Palmer had become a Catholic, and he had the boy baptized by a priest; an action which raised all the mother's powers of vituperation, for she could and did swear like a fish-wife—as the saying goes. It is very probable that she had already arranged her plans, for, having delivered her soul of its wrath, she had her trunks—which were already packed—the furniture, plate, every dish and cloth, even the servants, with the exception of the porter, taken to Richmond to the house of a brother. This must have been a stepbrother, as she was her father's only child. So when Roger returned to the house he found it denuded of everything. As Barbara had carefully made him aware of all that there was to know about the relative interests she felt in him and the King, Castlemaine went over to France determined, said gossip, to enter a monastery. It is needless to say that he did not adhere to this resolve.

Richmond is but a matter of four or five miles from Hampton Court where the King and his bride were staying, and Barbara's anxiety as to her own future status made Richmond a welcome change and a convenient point from which to view the situation. A few weeks later the baby was baptized again according

to the rites of the Church of England, the King, the Earl of Oxford, and one of the Queen's ladies, the Countess of Suffolk, aunt to Barbara, acting as sponsors.

Queen Catherine's troubles had begun as soon as she sailed into the harbour of Portsmouth. She was very uneducated, very narrow, and very bigoted ; she could not understand the marriage service which had to be performed by the Protestant as well as the Catholic rites, and refused to repeat the words. Her dowry of half a million in gold had been used to fit out forces against Spain, and in its place Charles, to his intense disgust, received jewels, sugar, cotton, silk, and other commodities to half that amount. She had been warned by her mother never to allow Lady Castlemaine to be presented to her, and she thought in her simplicity that it would be easy to obey this injunction. It was only necessary to mention it to her husband and he would agree ! She did mention it to Charles, who allowed the matter to pass for the moment, though he was determined that Barbara should have her place at Court.

Barbara put the question to the test ; and she lost no time in doing so. On the very day that she had quarrelled with her husband, when her child was scarcely three weeks old, having deposited all her belongings at Richmond, she dressed herself with care and drove to Hampton Court, for she was in a martial mood and had decided to begin at once the battle for supremacy.

The forlorn, strange little Queen received her guests with dignity and pleasant smiles, and Lady Castlemaine, led up by the King himself, met with the same

treatment as the others. A moment later, though, some one had whispered into Catherine's ear the name—which she had not caught—of the lady who had just been received. A cry of horror rang through the room, then the young Queen made a desperate attempt to control herself, but it was too much for her strength. The blood which rushed to her head poured from her nose, and she fell fainting to the floor. Yet a day or two later when Charles gave her a list of ladies who it was proposed should attend her bed-chamber, the name of Castlemaine was among them. Catherine pricked it out, and the real fight began. The Queen declared that she would go back to her own country rather than allow such an appointment to be made, and the King asked scoffingly how her own country and her own mother would receive her. As she held out against his wishes, Charles practically sent his bride to Coventry ; he did not speak to her and his minions followed his example ; she was left out of all gaiety, dances, riding parties ; even the servants became careless in waiting upon her, and all but one of her ladies were sent back to Portugal. Alone and despised in a strange country Catherine's life became a burden to her, yet for a time she resisted all commands to be compliant. Lord Clarendon, who was forced by Charles to the uncongenial task of persuading her, told his master that what he demanded was more than blood could stand ; but opposition only made the King more ferocious, he being well likened at the time to a wild boar showing his tusks.

Here is a paragraph from the letter he wrote to Clarendon on this occasion :

"I wish I may be as unhappy in this world, and in the world to come, if I fail in the least degree of what I am resolved ; which is, of making my Lady Castlemaine of my wife's bed-chamber ; and whosoever I find use any endeavours to hinder this resolution of mine, except it be only to myself, I will be his enemy to the last moment of my life." To this arbitrary pronouncement he at least had the grace to add that "the lady would behave with all duty and humility to Her Majesty, which, if she would fail to do, she should never see his face again."

Lady Castlemaine had no desire for the post either because of its honour or its emoluments, but both she and Charles wished that she should have apartments in the Royal household, and this offered the only way of securing them. At the end of six or eight weeks the Queen was wearied out and, to the surprise of every one, she voluntarily addressed Barbara one evening. This broke the ice, and the two women were from that time outwardly friends. Charles actually seemed proud of going about like an Eastern potentate with two wives in his carriage. Pepys gives us a picture of this, as well as of the Court held at Somerset House at this time by Henrietta Maria, who was then in England. This was during the first week in September after the reconciliation, and is very expressive, as described by the diarist, not only of the subjection into which Catherine had been thrown, but of the indifference of public opinion :

"I went into the Queen Mother's presence, where she was with our Queen sitting on her left hand, whom I never did see before ; and though she be not very charming, yet she hath a good, modest, and

innocent look, which is pleasing. Here I also saw Lady Castlemaine, and, which pleased me most, Mr. Crofts, the King's bastard, a most pretty spark of about fifteen years old, also do hang much upon my Lady Castlemaine, and is always with her, and I hear the Queens are both mighty kind to him. By and by in comes the King, and anon the Duke and his Duchess, so that, they being all together, was such a sight as I never could almost have happened to see with so much ease and leisure. They stayed till it was dark, and then went away ; the King and his Queen and my Lady Castlemaine and young Crofts in one coach, and the rest in other coaches."

Pepys generally expressed a great admiration for Barbara, and a fortnight earlier he had found a place among many others on the top of the Banqueting House in Whitehall to watch the young Queen arrive from Hampton Court. Lady Castlemaine was there, and as she had gone up from her apartment in the palace she was without her hat. Of this incident Pepys writes : " Methought it was strange to see her and her lord [Lord Castlemaine] upon the same place, walking up and down without taking notice of one another, only at first entry he put off his hat, and she made him a very civil salute, but afterwards took no notice one of another ; but both of them now and then would take their child, which the nurse held in her arms, and dandle it. One thing more : there happened a scaffold below to fall, and we feared some hurt ; but there was none, but she of all the great ladies only ran down among the common rabble to see what hurt was done, and did take care of a child that received some little hurt, which methought was

noble. Anon there came one there booted and spurred, that she talked long with ; and by and by, she being in her hair, she put on his hat, which was but an ordinary one, to keep the wind off ; but it became her mightily, as everything else do."

Catherine was blamed by many for giving way to the King's wishes, but it did at least give her physical comfort and the outward respect of her husband. She now knew definitely Charles's character, and with that knowledge came the other, that she would have to share his affections all her life, and be satisfied with the smaller part. Charles still seemed to feel some shame, for he treated the English who came over with his wife with great disfavour, for fear that they should learn too much as to how he behaved and tell it to the Queen, who, however, was at least clever enough to know more than they could tell her.

Though there was no expression of anger at Court at the laxity which obtained there, and though the genial Pepys took all the little incidents which he noted as ordinary occurrences, the great public began to gossip and lift up its hands in horror. Stories of licence and debauchery circulated, and the whisper went abroad that the Countess of Castlemaine's influence increased so that she was greater than the Queen, though Charles was said to show kindness to his wife. It was through Barbara that Sir Harry Bennet (Lord Arlington) and Sir Charles Berkeley (Lord Falmouth) became so intimate with the King ; history has condemned both men for their fast lives, such lives as would make Charles but love them more. Lady Castlemaine herself was accused of having intrigues with these gentlemen, and for some

reason of her own did her best to attract young Crofts, the fifteen-year-old son of Charles.

This boy was extremely handsome, and it is said that his very appearance raised the demon of jealousy in this extraordinary woman, because compared with him her own children "were like so many puppets." The King only laughed at her, and then she determined to gratify her resentment for this irreparable injury by pretending to take the lad under her care. She "mothered" him publicly, let him lead her out in the dance, and caressed him with an ever-increasing ardour. Gramont says that Charles felt no jealousy of her, but he very judiciously removed his son from danger by marrying him with great brilliancy and rejoicing to little Anne Scott, Countess of Buccleuch and owner of £10,000 a year. To fit him for this honour Crofts was made Duke of Monmouth in February, 1663.

Pepys is the authority for the statement that at this time Barbara was carrying on intrigues both with Bennet and Berkeley. "Captain Ferrers and Mr. Howe both have often, through my Lady Castlemaine's window, seen her go to bed, and Sir Charles Berkeley in the chamber." It is necessary to remember that Pepys repeated every scrap of gossip that he heard, that he made, and professed to make, no inquiry into the truth of things—he simply wrote down what some one told him. This should be kept in mind when considering what he says of the fair Frances Stuart, whose life at Court was at first much intertwined with that of Lady Castlemaine.

In spite of the whispers about Barbara's actions, which of course may not have reached the King,

Charles showed her more attention than ever, supping with her four times a week, most often staying till the morning and going home through the garden alone privately, so that even the sentries made jests about him. There is one story which shows more plainly than anything how great was her power over the King at this time. She had quarrelled with a Lady Gerard, who on January 4th, 1662-3, had prepared a state supper for the King and Queen. When every one was assembled and the tables were ready the King withdrew from the party and went to the house of Lady Castlemaine, where he remained all through the evening. It is suggested that in this rude action he was obeying orders which he had received earlier, and it may well be imagined that the incident did not make Lady Gerard love the King's mistress. A month or so later Lady Gerard made some remark to the Queen about Barbara, which the usual unfailing kind friend who was present repeated to the King, with the result that at a ball Charles invited Lady Gerard to dance with him, severely told her what he thought, and forbade her to attend upon his wife in future.

The name of Colonel James Hamilton was also linked with that of Barbara, and by this time the man in the street was fully alive to the character of the *maitresse en titre*, as she was called. Lampoons and squibs were published and sung about her, being fastened to doors, or in public places. This so much angered Charles that he seriously thought of shutting up the coffee-houses, which were then the centre of all gossip. At Merton College, Oxford, where one of Barbara's children was born on December 28th, 1665,

the songs in the streets were of her and the King, and how the latter could not leave Oxford until she was ready to accompany him, and a very plainly expressed couplet, done in Latin, it is true, was found one morning tacked to the door of her lodgings.

Barbara carried her determination to have her own way into everything ; if she found cause to dislike a statesman or minister she also found means to get rid of him ; the old tried loyalist, Sir Edward Nicholas, was superseded in the secretaryship by Sir H. Bennet, in 1663, and she conceived from the first a hatred of Clarendon, who would never allow anything to pass the seal in which she was named, just as the Earl of Southampton would not suffer her name to be entered in the Treasury books ; thus it was in her rooms that the plot against Clarendon, which led to his downfall, was hatched. There met Buckingham, Arlington, Clifford, Ashley, and Lauderdale in the cabal which, by a “whimsical coincidence,” as Macaulay says, on this occasion formed an anagram on their names. These men suffered many checks in their purpose of dismissing all the tried, experienced, honest councillors of the King, and for a long time the King himself withheld them. When Barbara was too insistent he once thoroughly lost his temper, telling her that “she was a jade that meddled with things which she had nothing at all to do with.”

Ormond sometimes foiled her schemes for raising money, for she was a rapacious place-seller ; she put her extravagant purchases down to the Privy purse, and drew large sums from the Irish Treasury. On one occasion when he refused to sanction another draft on Ireland she reviled him, swore at him, and

said she should like to see him hanged. To which the Duke responded quietly that, far from wishing to see her ladyship's days shortened in return, his greatest desire was to see *her* grow old. When the Chancellor once refused to verify some grant of a place which Lady Castlemaine had made he uttered the remark that that woman would sell everything. This, of course, was repeated to her, upon which she sent him the message “that she had disposed of the place, and did not doubt in time to dispose of his,” a promise which she kept.

As the months rolled on Charles grew very tired of this woman, who, however much her bold beauty might at one time have fascinated his eye, made his life alternately a burden with her wild tempers and a game with her high spirits. We hear of her and Charles chasing a moth about a room with all the ardour of schoolboys, and at another time quarrelling fiercely. At one date a diarist utters a word of pleasure that Castlemaine is out of favour, and a fortnight later says calmly that she entirely rules the King. But at the end of 1662 there came to Court a girl who was destined to give Barbara, Lady Castlemaine, a fairly unquiet time.

Barbara was the first to secure His Majesty's favour after his accession, but she was by no means the last, and though she kept her supremacy for ten years, she only did so by a continuous struggle. The other women who perceptibly affected Charles's life were Frances Stuart, Louise de Kéroualle, and, in a lesser degree, Nell Gwyn ; and it was the first-named of these who proved the first formidable rival to Barbara's influence.

Frances Teresa Stuart was born in 1648, being the

daughter of Walter Stuart and grand-daughter of the first Lord Blantyre. Her father, with his family, took refuge in France in 1649, and was attached to the household of Henrietta Maria ; thus she was educated in France, and if she did not become very learned, she was at least taught how to set off her pretty face to the greatest advantage. When she was thirteen or fourteen the question of her future arose, and Louis XIV was anxious that she should stay to ornament his Court ; however, the Queen-Mother of England thought otherwise, and sent her to England, with a letter of introduction to Charles II. So a farewell present from Louis terminated the girl's relations with the French Court. At the New Year of 1662-3, when she was not fifteen years old, Frances was appointed maid of honour to Queen Catherine, and at once stepped into that neglected lady's good graces.

Though girls were married at an absurdly early age at that time, and indeed for two hundred years later, they remained girl-wives, being no more matured than our schoolgirls to-day ; and at this date Frances, though regarded by the various historians as of marriageable age, was only a pretty, lanky, ungrown girl, ready to respond to any kindness shown her, and to be friends with every one. What Lady Castlemaine thought when she first saw her no one knows ; what she did was to try to attract the child to her side, as she tried to attract young Crofts, and at first she was very successful. Frances had only been at Court a month when a foolish frolic is reported between the two. Barbara invited the girl to an entertainment, and in the midst of it insisted that they loved each other so much that only marriage would meet the

case. So all the accessories to a church marriage were collected and a ring slipped on the slim finger. Then came the coarser ceremonies, made possible by custom, the decking with ribbons, the procession to the bedroom, and undressing the bride, flinging the stocking for luck, and administering a sack posset in bed. Such a piece of childish nonsense was natural enough to Frances, and perhaps to Barbara as well, for the latter was quite a young woman and easily amused with small things. But the older and over-wise courtiers saw more in it than a whim ; they took into account neither the age of the new maid, nor the rampant jealousy of Barbara's character, but gravely asserted that the amusement had an ulterior motive, in that Lady Castlemaine, after retiring to bed, gave up her place to the King. Taking into consideration the fiery temper and extremely jealous disposition of that lady this was an absurd rumour. Barbara simply could not have lent herself to such a scheme for her own discomfiture. If there was design in what she did, it was not that of giving herself a rival, but of blinding the King to the fact that he had a rival in her affections.

Barbara was at this time starting her intrigue with Henry Jermyn, Lord Dover, which was to lead to so many wordy conflicts with her master. From all that one hears of Jermyn he seems to have been one of the greatest rakes of the Restoration, though really the worst thing about him for his reputation's sake was his appearance. Had he been tall, handsome, and a favourite with men, he would not, in those days, have seemed so despicable as popular opinion held him to be. He was, however, short, with a large head and

little legs—a failing which neither man nor woman overlooks—full of conceit, and boasting that not a woman in the world could resist him. Report had already made him the accepted lover of Henrietta, Charles's sister, and of every coquettish lady about the Court; so when Barbara showed him marked kindness, he languidly determined to respond to her advances. Charles began to be suspicious and angrily resented the gossip which indicated that he had such a pigmy opposed to him; thus to deceive him Barbara took Frances to her heart, and when Charles paid his morning visit to her room he often found the pretty child lying by her side.

These early calls may well seem strange and improper to us, but in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it was no uncommon custom. The lazy Beauty drank her chocolate in bed, and partly made her toilet, and the gallant who was energetic made a good-morning call, finding the lady in bed, or under the hands of the hairdresser, with her dressing woman, or women, about. Towards the end of the eighteenth century the fop would have himself curled and scented and his locks artistically arranged on the pillow before he received the visits of his friends.

Barbara was playing a dangerous game, of which she only realized one side. Most people would have seen the other side first, for it was inevitable that in such circumstances Charles should fall in love with Frances. She should have been far too childish to be touched by his attentions, but her bringing-up had been extremely worldly, and infant as she was she had no desire to give something for nothing.

Both Barbara and Charles became irritable and sus-

picious : each was trying to fascinate an outsider while wishing to keep the loyalty of each other. Quarrels grew frequent, and it was after one such that to pacify her the King gave her all the Christmas presents which had been bestowed upon him by his peers and friends ; and we learn that at the great New Year's ball she was richer in jewels than the Queen and the Duchess of York together. The King certainly tried to keep up his idea of appearances, for he took Barbara to the play, and acknowledged her presence always in public. "At the Park was the King, and in another coach my Lady Castlemaine, they greeting one another at every turn."

Barbara had schemed until she had secured rooms in Whitehall near the King's chamber, and by May, 1663, had become a person to be feared and hated by the King's advisers, as well as a byword among the people. "The King do mind nothing but pleasures and hates the very sight and thought of business. My Lady Castlemaine rules him who, he sees, hath all the tricks of Aretin. If any of the sober counsellors give him good advice and move him in anything that is to his good and honour, the other part, which are his counsellors of pleasure, take him when he is with Lady Castlemaine, and in the humour of delight then persuade him that he ought not to hear nor listen to the advice of those old dotards, etc." Thus says that true registrar of public sentiment, Pepys.

In April, 1663, he writes : "I did hear that the Queen is much grieved at the King's neglecting her, he not having supped once with her this quarter of a year, and almost every night with my Lady Castlemaine, who hath been with him this St. George's feast

at Windsor, and come home with him last night ; and, which is more, they say is removed as to her bed from her own home to a chamber in White Hall, next to the King's own ; which I am sorry to hear, though I love her much."

Frances Stuart went on with her growing sufficiently to be called " a fine woman " a few months after her arrival, but Gramont's description of her at that time is perhaps the best for indicating what she was really like. " Her figure [general appearance] was more showy than engaging ; it was hardly possible for a woman to have less wit or more beauty : all her features were fine and regular, but her shape was not good : yet she was slender, straight enough, and taller than the generality of women ; she was very graceful, danced well, and spoke French better than her mother tongue : she was well bred, and possessed, in perfection, that air of dress which is so much admired, and which cannot be attained, unless it be taken, when young, in France. While her charms were gaining ground in the King's heart, the Countess of Castlemaine amused herself in the gratification of all her caprices."

By June we find Pepys sorrowing over Lady Castlemaine as not being as handsome as he had taken her for ; he even goes so far as to say that she begins to decay somewhat, " for which I am very sorry !" It may be that when Barbara found herself supplanted it told so much upon her spirits and temper that her face lost its charm, and there are many proofs of this.

That the King fell in love with other women did not make him an altogether indifferent husband ;

he rode and drove with the Queen, and always gave her all deference in public. We have a word picture of him riding with her hand-in-hand from the Park, she wearing a white-laced waistcoat and a crimson, short petticoat, and her hair dressed *à la negligence*, “mighty pretty.” Following them came Lady Castlemaine, among the other ladies, with an air of aloofness about her, no one noticing her and no gallants pressing forward in rivalry to help her down from her horse, so that her own gentleman had to assist her. Among them also was Frances Stuart, looking very charming “with her hat cocked and a red plume, with her sweet eye, little Roman nose, and excellent *taille*; the greatest beauty [says Pepys] I ever saw, I think, in my life; and if ever woman can, do exceed Lady Castlemaine, at least in this dress.”

Barbara seemed to lose her temper with every one by turns just now. As soon as Frances Stuart understood the favourite’s friendship, and as soon as the latter understood that the King had fallen in love with Frances, there was a battle royal between them, and the girl stood upon her dignity as primly as Barbara depended upon her temper. The former’s maids and the latter’s nursemaids joined in the quarrel, so that they could not meet without reviling each other and each other’s mistresses, with the result that the King himself had more than once to be called upon the scene to quiet them, much to the amusement of his courtiers. The Queen came in for some of Lady Castlemaine’s ill-humour, but she was weary of the loud-voiced virago, and answered her with quiet disdain. Coming into Catherine’s room one day when the long process of dressing was being accom-

plished, Lady Castlemaine cried pettishly, "Really, I wonder how Your Majesty can have the patience to sit so long a-dressing!" "I have so much reason to use patience that I can very well bear with it," replied the Queen significantly. One day the King said something that Barbara did not like, and in a raised voice she vowed she would leave the palace and never return. At once she set about collecting her belongings and servants, and took them all off to Richmond. This should have made Charles happy, and perhaps had Frances Stuart been readier to encourage his attentions it might have done so. As it was, his thoughts went repeatedly to Castlemaine, and two days after her departure he went hunting near Richmond, called to see her, and tried to patch up the quarrel, whereupon she vowed that she would not forgive him unless he begged her on his knees; so eventually the King knelt and said what she wished, and the next day she was back at Whitehall, to the disappointment of most of its inhabitants. But Charles was still further under her thumb, and meekly carried out her orders, letting her have and do just what she would. Even if she thought she wanted the King when he was in the Council Room, she had no hesitation in sending Sir Charles Berkeley for him, and His Majesty came at her word.

Yet this meek monarch was becoming more infatuated with little Stuart every day. From his pertinacity, the trouble he showed, and the persuasions he used, it is probable that this was the nearest he ever got to the reality of love, and it was the one case in which he was to be disappointed. Frances Stuart has been censured by her historians for loving childish amuse-

ments, such as blind-man's buff and card castles. "She only wanted a doll to make her entirely a child," says Gramont. None of them seems to have realized that she was at the very age when a healthy girl loves active play whether indoors or out, that, in fact, she was a child. The remarkable thing was that grave courtiers and roués as well as the King should succumb to the fascinations of a careless girl of fourteen or fifteen, should compete with her in building houses of cards, or even be ready happily to stand by her side handing the cards as she needed them. She was unaffected, amused at everything, and laughed lightly at them all.

The Duke of Buckingham held her regard for a time, for he could build the finest tower of cards imaginable, and he had a pleasant voice; besides, "he was the father and mother of scandal," and little Miss Stuart had lived too long in a scandal-loving society to object to listen to his amusing stories. The Duke was one of those versatile, volatile men who are always having a new idea about something, and seeing how enamoured the King was with Frances, he imagined that to get an ascendancy over her was to have influence indirectly with the King. But he did not allow for her youth. She pealed with laughter at his stories, sang songs with him, competed in card-building, and if he absented himself when she wanted him would send all over the town to find him; but as soon as he became serious, as soon as she realized that he, a married man, was suggesting impossible things to her, he met with so severe a repulse that he abandoned at once all his designs upon her. However, he had to some extent gained his end, for

he had come to something like familiarity with the King.

A courtier who appears again and again in these short memoirs is Sir Henry Bennet, who, with Charles Berkeley, was raised to the King's favour by Barbara. Berkeley did not live long to enjoy the honours thrust upon him, but Bennet, under the title of Earl of Arlington, became principal Secretary of State and Lord Chamberlain. He was a timid, underhand sort of man, with no genius, yet with a useful experience of State affairs, which kept him in office when more honest men were in disfavour, a man of whom public opinion, voiced by Pepys, said very hard things. In a diplomatic affair abroad he had fallen in love with Spanish gravity, and ever after cultivated a serious air and profound manner, which Gramont says was accentuated by a plaster of a lozenge shape, which, fixed across his nose over an old scar, added to his mysterious looks. Lord Arlington was, like so many other men, attracted by the grace and beauty of Frances Stuart, and at last determined to wait upon her with the idea of offering her his humble service and best advice as to how to conduct herself in her new post. The girl received him kindly, and listened to the somewhat pompous preface to his explanation of his visit. Suddenly, as she listened, there entered her mind some words and descriptions of the Duke of Buckingham's, in which this man was caricatured. The memory was too much for her when aided by Arlington's solemn air, sedate manner, and the patch, and suddenly she broke into laughter, all the more violent and long because she had struggled to restrain it. The Earl ceased speaking, stared at her for a moment,

then abruptly left the room, wasting all the fine advice he had meant to bestow upon her. He was in such a rage that he thought of going to Lady Castlemaine and joining her faction, or of quitting the Court party and proposing an Act in Parliament to forbid the King having mistresses—but he ended by going to Holland and there getting a wife.

James Hamilton, the eldest of the brothers Hamilton, the best-dressed man at Court, the best dancer and the most general lover, at one time desired the hand of the little maid of honour, but she laughed at him as at all others, scarcely realizing that he was serious in his aims, a fact which he himself soon forgot. Francis Digby, Lord Bristol's son, was later the victim of a real honest love for the girl, and because she would not accept him it was said that he flung away the life that he no longer valued in the great sea fight with the Dutch in 1672. If that was so he had been some years making up his mind, as Frances married in 1667.

All through this spring and summer of 1663 Frances Stuart lived her giddy, half-girlish, half-grown-up life at Court, accepting all the attention offered her, refusing all serious proposals, and enjoying herself mightily. Lady Castlemaine was not so happy; one day she was all in evidence at Court, the next some slighting word drove her to sulk in her own house; she was made much of by some, snubbed by others. One night her cousin, the Duke of Buckingham, gave an entertainment to the King and Queen, to which they did not invite Barbara. “Much good may it do them,” she said, with a shrug; “and for all that I will be as merry as they.” So she went home, had a

great supper laid, and sat down to wait, knowing that the King would sympathize with her at the slight. And, in fact, on leaving the Duke's house he came straight to Barbara, and remained until the next morning. Following this, she would make some exorbitant demand, or publicly show her liking of Jermyn, upon which there would be a fierce and somewhat one-sided quarrel with the King, she cursing and shouting, like the termagant that she was, and flouncing out of the palace.

The third person to be considered at this time was the Queen, the lonely, brave little woman who, after the first shock when she learned what her married life entailed, hid her unhappiness from others, grew brisk and debonair, won from her errant husband the opinion that she was the best woman in the world, and even raised the hope among the people that she would triumph over Castlemaine. In October she fell very ill of some fever ; one wonders how much it was brought on by her unnatural life of repression, and by another worry of which no one had guessed until delirium gave it word.

Her illness was so long and so serious that every one believed she would die. Pigeons were applied to the soles of her feet—how mad were the prescribed nostrums of that day !—and Extreme Unction was administered. All the Court, however, became very deferential to Frances Stuart, believing that the King's passion for her was so sincere that it would raise her to the throne on the Queen's death. The little Stuart's heart beat with unusual violence, and the Duke of York's friends prayed with more than ordinary fervour for “the Queen and all the Royal family.”

With all his faults, however, Charles could not bear to see suffering, and his wife's illness called out all that was best in his nature. He sat by her bed, held her hand, soothed her when she raved, and took her condition so much to heart that he wept over her, and when she said that she willingly left all the world but him, he begged her to live for his sake. As she lost all control of her mind her talk became pathetic in its revelations. She thought that her illness had been caused by the birth of a child, and wondered that she had felt no pain, and said it was a sore trouble that her boy was ugly. "No," said the King, "it is a very pretty boy." "Ah! if it be like you, it is a fine boy indeed, and I would be very pleased with it," was her answer. Day after day she raved of children, thus betraying the pain which she must have felt at her childless life. She had three children, she said, and the girl was very like her husband; and on waking from a sleep her first words were, "How do the children?" The fever gradually left her, and the fact that she recovered she attributed to Charles's kind words and care.

To relieve his mind and soothe the worry under which he laboured, Charles went every night of his wife's illness to sup with Lady Castlemaine. One tempestuous evening the river rose and flooded Barbara's kitchen, when there was a chinc of beef for supper, and the cook coming to tell her that no roasting could be done that night, she lost her temper, crying, "Zounds! but it shall be roasted if you have to set the house on fire to do it." So the joint was taken next door, for Lord Sandwich's cook to deal with.

Anxiety about the Queen being allayed, some of

Charles's friends entered into a little conspiracy to induce Frances Stuart to give the King his way, the Duke and Duchess of Buckingham, Lord Arlington, and Edward Montague forming a committee for that purpose. However, the girl was no fool, nor was she self-proud ; she was what Pepys in scarcely elegant language calls "a cunning slut," for she took counsel with Henrietta Maria and with her own mother as soon as she saw something strange was premeditated, and so "all the plot was spoiled, the committee fallen to pieces and the Duchess [of Buckingham] going to a nunnery."

CHAPTER IV

FRANCES STUART, DUCHESS OF RICHMOND

“The picture of fair Venus that
(For which men say the goddess sat)
Was lost, till Lely from your look
Again that glorious image took.”

Edmund Waller.

By the time Frances Stuart had been nearly a year at Court she must have been hardened to all its ways, and she now began to give the King many liberties and much encouragement. He neglected Lady Castlemaine altogether, and, to use a word much in vogue, he doted on Miss Stuart, getting into corners with her, and kissing her before all his little world ; and she, expecting this sort of thing, stayed by herself, instead of mixing with the others, just as two years earlier Barbara Palmer had done. Charles was still kind to his old love, but evinced no such fondness as once he had shown her. By the New Year the King was absolutely besotted ; denial had not before been offered him and it raised his passion to white heat. He attended to no business, he openly neglected the Queen, whose life he had saved so recently with soft words, and he cared not who saw him at his love-making. He was so constantly in Miss Stuart’s rooms that it was usual for any one who wished to see him to make the inquiry, “ Is the King above or below ? ” which was to say, in his own apartments or on the



FRANCES STUART, DUCHESS OF RICHMOND, AS DIANA

(*After Ley*)

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lower floor, where Miss Stuart lodged. Lady Castlemaine is said to have revenged herself for this by encouraging the attentions of various courtiers, one being Lord Sandwich, who tried to carry on this intrigue secretly, so that he would lead her from her lodgings in the "darkest and most obscure manner," and leave her at the entrance to the Queen's lodgings, that he might be the least observed.

But no matter what happened Barbara refused to take second place in public. Pepys was at the theatre one evening when she and the King were there and noticed that she was in the box next to the King's. In the middle of the play she leaned across the intervening ladies and called the King. He naturally answered her, and a whispered conversation took place. Then she abruptly rose from her seat and entered Charles's box ; there not being much room, his attendants did what they could to make way for her, and she came to the front, squeezed herself between the King and the Duke of York, and so sat out the play, "which put the King and everybody out of countenance."

It was in July, 1664, that the picture of Frances Stuart was painted, in the Chair Room opening into one of the galleries of Whitehall. Pepys, who was waiting to see some one, watched her coming out of that room one day after her sitting, and he says she was "in a most lovely form (*tout ensemble*), with her hair all about her ears. There was the King and twenty more, I think, standing by all the while, and a lovely creature she in the dress seemed to be." She was also painted by Huysman in a buff doublet like a soldier.

As for the portraits of Lady Castlemaine, there were at least five full-length ones by or after Lely, one as Mary Magdalen, and seven three-quarter length, of which the finest is represented by an engraving of her as Bellona or Minerva. Wissing and Gascar also painted her, and her biographer, Steinman, says that there are thirty different engravings of her pictures.

Though there was much love-making at the Court of Charles II there were few marriages, for the King, like Queen Elizabeth, did not like to see the fair ones of the opposite sex become independent of him and all his ways, causing Lady Castlemaine to remark, with a laugh, that her own little daughter, then two years old, would be the first maid in the Court to be married. One of Charles's good points was his love for children ; it is said that he would go to Lady Castlemaine's at midnight to see the baby, taking it from its nurse's arms to dance it about.

During these days the Chevalier de Gramont was a personage at the English Court, though banished from that of his master Louis for paying too much attention to a lady favoured by that monarch. Having received much courtesy from Charles, and desiring to show his appreciation of the friendship bestowed upon him, he ordered a calash to be built in Paris for the King ; something newer even than the latest invention—that of glass coaches, which had not so far found favour with Englishwomen—which should partake of the ancient fashion and yet be preferable to the modern. The man he sent for it returned with “the most elegant and magnificent calash that had ever been seen,” which was duly presented to the King, who would only accept it on the condition

that the chevalier would not refuse another favour from him, as he had once done in the past. All the women of the Court admired the beautiful carriage and desired to use it, but the first who appeared publicly in it were the Queen and the Duchess of York. My Lady Castlemaine, with her fine breeding, thought what a sorry show those two made in such a magnificent vehicle, and from that saw how splendidly it would set off her own handsome figure and face ; so she at once asked the King to lend it to her on the first fine day to drive in the Park. The mischievous Frances was determined that that should not be ; anything should happen rather than that her rival should snatch such a favour ; so she set herself to fascinate the King anew and to persuade him to lend her the carriage first. Charles did not know what to say or do. Each lady used cajolery, then threats, the latter getting of a more and more intimate nature. As Lady Castlemaine expected again to become a mother, she played upon Charles's paternal love, and foretold mortal illness to herself and babe if her desire were not granted. The bold and quick-witted girl, however, seized her moment : she threatened that never would she become a mother if her request were refused. That settled the matter, for such a prospect of asceticism did not meet with Charles's approval. Frances Stuart rode proudly in the calash, and Lady Castlemaine was thrown into so terrible a rage that she almost brought about the fulfilment of her own prophecy. It settled something more important also, and that was the girl's reputation, for it was generally believed that she rewarded Charles in the way he most desired. There is, however, no evidence that

this really happened beyond a line in the Memoirs. Pepys constantly remarks that Mrs. Stuart is said to be the King's mistress, or that some one tells him that Charles "do intrigue with her," but this old piece of news crops up regularly at intervals for years, and Pepys ends by saying that Mrs. Stuart had played a very worthy part.

The fashion of choosing valentines was very popular at that time, and in 1664 Frances chose the King as her valentine. The person chosen had to give a present to the woman who had honoured him, and the royal gift was probably the pearl necklace, worth about £1100, which Frances afterwards said was one of the few presents which she had accepted from Charles. A year later the Duke of York took it into his head to believe himself terribly in love with Mrs. Stuart, upon which she declared him to be her valentine, receiving as a gift a jewel which was valued at £800. She received an annual allowance from the Privy purse of £700 a year for clothes, and took nothing more. So considering the remarkable way in which Lady Castlemaine secured gifts and sums of money—£30,000 once from Charles—besides an income of £4700 from the Post Office, large grants from the Excise and Customs, huge "rents" from place-holders, grants of plate from the "jewel-house," and an enormous income from the sale of offices and favours—there is no proof that Miss Stuart had placed herself in such a position as to be awarded similar emoluments.

Anthony Hamilton, the writer of the Chevalier Gramont's Memoirs, joined the glad throng of Frances Stuart's lovers, and obtained her friendship by an

absurd trick. Gramont, who was in love with Hamilton's sister, was alarmed to see not only that Anthony was deeper in love than was consistent with his fortunes, but that "that inanimate statue, Miss Stuart," attended to him with pleasure. So he took the young man to task and pointed out the danger of his paying attentions to a girl "on whom the King seems every day to dote with increasing fondness." He spoke with so much effect that Hamilton explained how the affair had begun, and undertook to break it off at once. Turning to Gramont, he said :

" You are acquainted with all her childish amusements. The old Lord Carlingford was at her apartment one evening, showing her how to hold a lighted wax candle in her mouth, and the grand secret consisted in keeping the burning end there a long time without its being extinguished. I have, thank God, a pretty large mouth, and, in order to outdo her teacher, I took two candles into my mouth at the same time, and walked three times round the room without their going out. Every person present adjudged me the prize of this illustrious experiment, and Killigrew maintained that nothing but a lantern could stand in competition with me. Upon this she was like to die with laughing ; and thus was I admitted into the familiarity of her amusements."

Of his subsequent friendship with the fair maid of honour Hamilton has much to say which reflected upon her good sense and delicacy. She either was what gossip was very ready to proclaim her to be or she was a pretty fool, always delighted to play with fire but determined never to be burnt. Hamilton supports the latter view by saying that it would be

easy to persuade her to do most extraordinary things "without ever reflecting upon what she was doing."

Other writers fully bear out this statement. In a despatch to Louis from one of his emissaries in England, it is asserted that Frances Stuart "had a leg so admirably shaped that an ambassador, on arriving in England and calling on her, begged her as a favour to let him see almost up to her knee, so as to be able to write to his master to confirm what he had heard about the perfection of her calf and ankle."

Gramont also tells a serio-comic story of green stockings which is worth repeating. As has already been recorded, the Duke of York paid sufficient attention to Lady Chesterfield to make Lord Chesterfield ill with jealousy. The man fully deserved it ; he had been Barbara's lover until the Restoration, and in anger at her liaison with the King he had married the beautiful daughter of the Duke of Ormond. As soon as she was his wife she began to understand the position of affairs ; she found that she was absolutely nothing to her husband, who treated her with indifference and coldness. So she revenged herself by flirting with other men, and as soon as Chesterfield saw her surrounded with admirers he began to value her. However, she had been so deeply wounded that she bade him go his way while she went hers. One of her ways was to amuse herself by detaching the Duke of York from his amours, and she was soon quite successful in making him think himself in love with her. Chesterfield noted the symptoms and grew mad with jealousy, going about hunting for

proofs and confiding in Hamilton, who also was secretly in love with the wilful woman.

It may not be easy to foresee what this had to do with Miss Stuart's stockings, but the sequel will show. In his miserable speculations Chesterfield, in drawing together his proofs, said to Count Hamilton : "Lady Chesterfield is amiable, it must be acknowledged ; but she is far from being such a miracle of beauty as she supposes herself ; you know she has ugly feet ; but perhaps you are not acquainted that she has still worse legs. They are short and thick ; and, to remedy these defects as much as possible, she seldom wears any other than green stockings.

" I went yesterday to Miss Stuart's, after the audience of those damned Muscovites ; the King arrived there just before me ; and as if the Duke had sworn to pursue me wherever I went that day, he came in just after me. The conversation turned upon the extraordinary appearance of the ambassadors. I know not where that fool Crofts had heard all these Muscovites had handsome wives ; and that all their wives had handsome legs. Upon this the King maintained that no woman ever had such handsome legs as Miss Stuart ; and she, to prove the truth of His Majesty's assertion, with the greatest imaginable ease immediately showed her leg above the knee. Some were ready to prostrate themselves in order to adore its beauty ; for indeed none can be handsomer ; but the Duke alone began to criticize. He contended that it was too slender, and that as for himself he would give nothing for a leg which was not thicker and shorter, and concluded by saying, that no leg was worth anything without green stockings ; now this, in

my opinion, was a sufficient demonstration that he had just seen green stockings, and had them fresh in his remembrance."

Poor Lady Green Stockings ! She expiated her sins in the heart of the country, with her suspicious husband as her constant companion, and died in a few years. As for the irresponsible Frances Stuart, who was then sixteen or seventeen, it is not to be wondered at that there were those who questioned her propriety.

Among the other men who loved Frances Stuart was Philip Roettiers, celebrated as a medallist, who came to England to make the Peace of Breda medal in 1667. Upon it La Belle Stuart figures as Britannia seated at the foot of a rock, with the legend " Favente Deo " ; she was also engraved as Britannia on the Naval Victories medal of the same year. This placing her upon medals seemed to become something of a fashion, for one was struck solely in her honour with the Britannia on the reverse, and in the British Museum is to be seen her portrait on a thin plate of gold, which induced Waller to write these lines upon The Golden Medal :

" Our guard upon the royal side !
On the reverse our beauty's pride !
Here we discern the frown and smile ;
The force and glory of our isle.
In the rich medal, both so like
Immortals stand, it seems antique ;
Carved by some master, when the bold
Greeks made their Jove descend in gold ;
And Danae, wond'ring at that show'r,
Which falling storm'd her brazen tow'r.
Britannia there, the fort in vain
Had batter'd been with golden rain ;
Thunder itself had failed to pass ;
Virtue's a stronger guard than brass."

The last four lines express the belief that neither by gold nor anger was Frances to be won, and Lady Castlemaine is evidently meant in the last word. Roettier also designed the halfpenny and placed the face and figure of Frances upon its reverse, though it was not issued until 1672.

Another admirer was her cousin Charles Stuart, third Duke of Richmond, who was much too fond of wine, being mentioned by Gramont as “that drunken sot Richmond.” He was however married, and his admiration did not trouble any one seriously.

At the Duke of Monmouth’s marriage we are told that the fair Stuart, “then in the meridian of her glory” (she was only fifteen at the time!), attracted all eyes, and commanded universal respect and admiration, and that Castlemaine did her utmost to outshine her by wearing a load of jewels and by all the artificial ornaments of dress, but in vain. The rivalry between Stuart and Castlemaine never decreased, the two always being compared by the diarists; indeed, Barbara’s continued enmity made things very difficult for Frances, who continued to throw out hints of retiring from Court, hints which rendered the King absolutely frantic. He too was a difficult person to deal with in those days, being moody and bad-tempered, alternately slighted and smiled upon by the wilful girl, who, while desiring to keep her ascendancy, was also determined to keep her reputation. Charles offered to reform his Court, to give up all other mistresses if she would only show him the love he needed; but in vain. The Duke of Buckingham actually planned to abduct the Queen and send her off to the plantations, which at least would give an

excuse for a divorce, and so make room for Miss Stuart. Charles was however less depraved than his adviser ; for he was horrified at the suggestion, saying “ it was a wicked thing to make a poor lady miserable, only because she was his wife and had no children, which was not her fault.” Yet he was so far taken with the idea of divorce that when he knew that he had a formidable rival in Miss Stuart’s affections he asked Archbishop Sheldon if the Church of England would allow of a divorce where both parties were consenting and one lay under a natural incapacity for having children ?

There were others besides the Duke of Buckingham ready to help Charles to get rid of one wife and take another. During the heat of the Popish Plot, that arch-villain and last word in affectation, Titus Oates, stood at the bar of the House of Commons and cried :

“ Aie, Taitus Oates, accause Catherine, Queen of England, of haigh treason ! ” And to this charge he added the evidence that he had once stood behind a door which was ajar and had overheard the Queen declare that she had resolved to give her consent to the assassination of her husband. The public, moved by its fear of Popery, was inclined to believe this story, but Charles had more sense ; he had Oates put under confinement, and it might have gone worse with him than it did had there not been some in high station who were too involved in Oates’ conspiracies to dare to allow him to be executed. “ They think,” said Charles, “ I have a mind to a new wife, but for all that I will not see an innocent woman abused.”

Years later when Charles, in one of his virtuous moods, determined to start a revised scheme of life, he said of Catherine to Bishop Burnet that she was a weak woman, and had some disagreeable humours, but was not capable of a wicked thing, and considering his faultiness towards her in other ways, he thought it a horrid thing to abandon her. He said he looked on falsehood and cruelty as the greatest crimes in the sight of God ; he knew he had led a bad life, but he was breaking himself of all his faults, and he would never do a base or wicked thing. This was the man then engaged in intriguing with France against the interest of his own country for the sake of putting money in his pocket !

All through this period the Queen was friendly to Frances, for she found her gentle, bright, and, so far as could be told, honest. She had another quality which saved her from all enemies excepting Lady Castlemaine, and that was that she was never heard to speak evil of any one.

But though Catherine had schooled herself to think it necessary to be kind to those whom her husband loved, there were times when she would fain have been free from them all and have a little breathing space in which to realize that she herself was of some account in her husband's life. She thought no less of her dream-children now that she was well than she had thought in the madness of her illness ; her one desire was to be a mother, and once she went to Tunbridge Wells, hoping that a course of the waters would produce a good effect, just as a little later Mary of Modena went to Bath with the most beneficial result, if we may credit the fact sworn to by so many that

James, the Pretender, was her son. Catherine chose a time for going when Barbara was unable to accompany her—"as her very presence at Court at that moment would have been like an insult to the Queen"—and made all her preparations with an unusual gaiety of spirit. The King was going with her, and all promised well for Catherine until Charles commanded Miss Stuart to be one of the party, and she, looking more handsome than ever, began to make magnificent preparations. Thenceforward the poor Queen lost all interest in the projected visit; she did not dare to complain, but all hopes of success forsook her, and her happiness was gone.

Indeed, Catherine's injuries were great. She lived humbly compared with Barbara, her very jointure was said to be bestowed upon the King's favourites, and she rarely had money. Pepys waxed indignant over this in 1664 when he wrote: "The King doats beyond all shame upon his women and that the good Queen will of herself stop sometimes before she goes into her dressing-room for fear of finding him there with Mrs. Stuart; and that some of the best parts of the Queen's jointure are, contrary to faith and against the opinion of the Lord Treasurer, bestowed or rented to Lord Fitzharding and Stuart and others of that crew."

By the end of 1666 matters got into a strained condition all round. Lady Castlemaine was becoming more and more notorious for her ardent friendships with different men, so that when flouted by Miss Stuart Charles felt more or less debarred from consoling himself with Barbara, "the wanton," as Killigrew once called her, being promptly banished the

Court for his temerity. Charles could not for the life of him imagine what Frances wanted him to do, and nothing that he tried pleased her. Then, on January 6th, 1667, the Duchess of Richmond died, and as soon as she was buried the Duke appeared in the train of Frances Stuart, and even went to the King asking permission to wed her. It was a daring thing to do, for Richmond had managed to secure many favours from Charles, and had much to lose by his anger. However, the King seems to have thought it a ruse, and met it by pretending to accede to his request. Secretly he ordered Lord Clarendon to examine into Richmond's estates, for he knew that the Duke's affairs were in a bad way ; and he offered to make Frances a duchess in her own right and settle an estate upon her. Burnet, who generally found evil in Clarendon's actions, says that instead of playing the King's game he persuaded Frances that though Richmond's affairs were not very clear, a family so nearly related to the King would never be left in distress, and that, in fact, such a match would not come in her way every day. Frances refused Charles's offer, both of title and estates, and for a time seemed to have forgotten the projected marriage. Yet she made up her mind that nothing but marriage and absence from Court would put and keep her right before the world.

The King was genuinely in love, yet that did not mean that he had no eyes for other women, and a comic incident happened about this time which showed not only how much he was under the domination of Miss Stuart, but how jealous she was of her ascendancy over him.

Frances Jennings, the handsome sister of the future Duchess of Marlborough, had been given the post of maid of honour to the Duchess of York, and James had at once capitulated to her charms. She would, however, have none of him. He took to writing her love letters, pushing one into her hand, her muff, her pocket, an action which was often witnessed by others ; then she would shake her muff or pull out her handkerchief as soon as his back was turned, so that unopened *billet-doux* fell about her like hailstones, and whoever pleased might take them up. This so piqued the curiosity of Charles that he determined to see if he could not win where his brother failed. He was a wit, and the fair Jennings was wonderfully pleased with wit ; he was a King, “ and royal majesty, prostrate at the feet of a young person, is very persuasive.” Who knows what might have happened had not Frances Stuart been roused to action ?

She took the King in hand, demanded that he should cease his attentions to Mrs. Jennings, and ended her harangue with, “ Leave to your brother, the Duke, the care of tutoring the Duchess’s maids of honour, and attend to your own flock. But if you must pursue this girl I demand the liberty of listening to those who are ready to offer me a settlement in life which I think to my advantage.”

The King, as usual when a woman opposed him, knuckled under at once. He cared nothing for Mrs. Jennings, though his jaded fancy had been caught by the exciting prospect of a chase, so he meekly returned to his allegiance to Frances Stuart. She, however, though pleased at this proof of her power, still intended to settle down honourably, and knowing

that the Court offered her nothing worth having, she encouraged the attentions of her cousin, hoping to bring the affair to a peaceable conclusion. In this she forgot Lady Castlemaine, and that lady contrived to give at least a touch of drama to the end of this love episode. She had never ceased to rail bitterly against Miss Stuart as the cause of the King's coldness to her, and against the King's weakness, which had led him, for the sake of an inanimate idiot, to treat her with indignity. She had spies in the palace and still retained her old rooms there, and one night she heard the news for which she was waiting.

She watched Charles come, with very black face, from Frances Stuart's apartments, and slipping through the room of Chiffinch, the notorious page of the backstairs, into the King's cabinet, she presented herself before him, thus adding to his anger. But before he could express his feelings she said, with ironical humility, "I hope I may at least be allowed to pay you my homage, although the angelic Stuart has forbidden you to visit me at my house. I have not come to reproach or to expostulate with you, or to excuse myself for my frailties, seeing that your constancy for me allows me no defence. I have no other intention than to comfort and to console you upon the grief into which her coldness or new-fashioned chastity has plunged Your Majesty." At this she burst into a fit of laughter "as unnatural and strained as it was insulting and immoderate," which completely infuriated the King; but as he would have answered her she stopped him again by telling him that if the Duke of Richmond were not at that moment with Miss Stuart he soon would be there, and added, "Don't

believe what I say, but find out for yourself. Follow me to her apartment that you may either honour her with a just preference if what I say is false ; or if my information is found to be true, you will no longer be the dupe of a pretended prude, who makes you act so ridiculous a part."

She then took him by the hand and pulled him towards her rival's rooms.

There was no one to warn Frances Stuart, for Chiffinch was retained in Castlemaine's interest, and another servant who was in the secret came and whispered in the latter's ear that the Duke of Richmond had just gone into Miss Stuart's rooms. As Charles entered the door leading to the girl's apartments, Lady Castlemaine bade him good night and went back to her own chamber to await the news.

In the vestibule the King met some chambermaids, who respectfully opposed his entrance, one telling him that her mistress had been seriously ill since he left, but had gone to bed and was now, God be thanked, in a very fine sleep.

"I will see that for myself," said Charles, pushing the woman aside and marching through the sitting-room to the bedroom. It was quite true that Miss Stuart was in bed, but she was certainly not asleep, for the Duke of Richmond was sitting by her. The scene that followed was short and sharp. "The King, who of all men was one of the most mild and gentle," as one of his admirers says, uttered his rage to the Duke in such terms as he had never before used about anything, rendering him absolutely speechless, indeed almost petrified, until his eyes fell upon the window, below which flowed the Thames. The ungovernable

anger of Charles and fear of the easy revenge which the window offered to the King stirred the Duke to action ; he made a profound bow, and left the room without replying a single word to the torrent of threats which had poured upon him.

Frances Stuart, however, had learned one lesson from Lady Castlemaine. Instead of being fearful or apologetic she began to complain of the way the King had treated her ; said that if she were not allowed to receive visits from a man of rank who came with honourable intentions she was a slave in a free country ; that she knew no reason why she should not marry whom she pleased, and if she could not do that in England, she did not believe any power on earth could prevent her from going into a nunnery in France to enjoy the peace which was denied her here. She cried and threatened to kill herself, and reduced the King to the point of throwing himself upon his knees to beg for pardon, when she demanded that he should leave her to repose, and not offend the person who had brought him to her room by a longer visit. Stung again to anger the King went out abruptly, saying he would never see her again ; and it is said he passed the most restless and uneasy night he had experienced since the Restoration.

The next morning the Duke of Richmond set out very early for his country seat, without waiting to receive the King's command that he should never again appear at Court ; and as soon as it was possible Frances threw herself at the Queen's feet, and with tears protested her sorrow at ever having caused Her Majesty any uneasiness, adding that her repentance induced her to desire, most sincerely, to retire from

the Court, for which reason she had accepted the Duke of Richmond's attentions, as he had long been in love with her. Now, however, love had brought about his disgrace and had created a great disturbance which would do injury to her reputation, therefore she begged Her Majesty's protection and help to persuade the King to let her go into a convent and so end all the troubles she had caused. This, of course, worked upon the kind Queen's feelings ; she mingled her tears with those of Frances, and promised to do all she desired. Yet, on second thoughts, she decided differently. She knew that if Miss Stuart were not absorbing Charles's attentions some one else would, and as she must have a rival she considered Frances would be better than any one else ; then, too, she hoped to win her husband's gratitude by keeping at his side this girl whom he loved. So she begged Miss Stuart to abandon her schemes, prevailed upon her to think no more of Richmond, and actually reconciled her with Charles.

For a short time there was peace, Charles was happy and Mistress Stuart appeared to be so. But she was evidently determined to establish herself on a basis which was somewhat more solid than that of the King's favour. Towards the end of March, 1667, she stole quietly from her rooms at Whitehall, and went through a raging storm to the "Beare by London Bridge," where she met the Duke of Richmond. They journeyed down into Kent and were married in Cobham Hall.

The morning after Frances Stuart's elopement Lord Cornbury, the Earl of Clarendon's son, was going to her rooms to see her upon some business

matter, when he met the King coming from her door, his face dark with fury. Charles, thinking that Cornbury knew all about the affair, was delighted to have some one upon whom he could vent his rage, and the young man had to stand and listen to such a storm of invective as had never assailed his ears before. Every time he tried to interpose the King grew more fierce, and the interview closed with Cornbury, in a panic, not knowing how he had offended or how to defend himself. Later in the day he was admitted to the King's presence and then allowed to speak, being finally exonerated from blame. Yet, Burnet says, this made so deep an impression upon Charles's mind that he resolved to take the seal from Cornbury's father, Clarendon.

He is said to have believed that Clarendon played him false in the matter of the Duke of Richmond's estate; also that he had heard of the idea of the divorce and was so disturbed by it that he had at once incited the lovers to an elopement that he might keep the succession secure to his daughter's husband.

In April, 1667, Pepys and Evelyn had a nice long gossip over the events of the day, and Evelyn told his friend among other things how he believed Miss Stuart to be as virtuous a woman as any in the world; and that she was come to that pass that she would have married any gentleman of £1500 a year who would have her in honour, for she could no longer stay at Court without yielding to the King, and that she will never again go to Court excepting just to kiss the Queen's hand, and that she had sent back to Charles all the jewels he had given her—which had much annoyed him.

For a time after the flight of Frances, Lady Castlemaine was happy : she had the King all to herself, and she contrived to hide from him all information of the various lovers whom she favoured. They went expeditions together to buy jewels, which were paid for from the Privy purse ; they played at games and romped like children, and they quarrelled like children. On one occasion the Queen said to her before her ladies in her drawing-room that she feared the King took cold by staying so late at her house. At which Lady Castlemaine answered with temper that he did not stay late with her, for he left her house early ; therefore, if he was late, he must go somewhere else. As she spoke the King entered, and overhearing her answer was seized by sudden temper in his turn. He whispered in her ear that she was a bold, impertinent woman, who should leave the Court and not come back until he sent for her. With furious but haughty air she swept from the room, and presently, from Whitehall, going to a lodging in Pall Mall. For three days there was silence, then she sent to ask the King whether she could not fetch her things away. Charles practically answered that if she wanted them she must come for them, and of course she went, Charles seeing her when she arrived and making up the quarrel. There is a hint that she had made use of threats during those three days, declaring that she would publish the letters she had received from him.

Another time the quarrel was about the Duke of Buckingham's disgrace, and Barbara added to many coarse and wild words those of calling Charles a fool to his face. The intimacy with Jermyn had dragged its weary length through several years, and when

Barbara announced the expected birth of another child the King absolutely refused to own it, which sent the delightful lady into a paroxysm of rage. With oaths and screamings she vowed to him that unless he owned it and had it christened in the Royal chapel she would bring the babe to Whitehall and dash its brains out before all who might be present. Then she swept from the palace like a tornado, shutting herself up in the house of Sir Daniel Harvey, where—for she had again uttered many disquieting threats in her rage—the King sought her. The reconciliation was not quite so easy this time, but at last, when Charles prayed for her pardon on his knees, and promised a specially coveted present, Barbara condescended to be friends. But this had taken some days, and all London was laughing over the affair, and lampoons were written upon it. The promise of plate—in this instance 5600 ounces from the jewel-house—was promptly fulfilled.

Between March and August of 1677 various efforts had been made to induce Clarendon voluntarily to give up his Chancellor's Seal, and Barbara worked as heartily as any one in achieving the unfortunate man's downfall. On more than one occasion she was heard to express a wish that she could have his head on a stake, and she lost no opportunity of adding to Charles's wrath against his minister. When at last he fell she showed extravagant delight, and to see him pass from his interview with the King, rushed out in her smock into her aviary which overlooked Whitehall and loudly bandied jests with the courtiers upon the event.

Charles could not long be faithful to Barbara, and

a new beauty soon arose to disturb her peace in the form of Nell Gwyn, the pretty orange-seller who was allowed to vend her fruit in the pit of the Theatre Royal. When Barbara was twenty-six Nell was but seventeen, pretty, arch, and gay, her tongue given to repartee, and quite devoid of affectation. Charles Hart, grand-nephew to Shakespeare, and John Lacy, the actors, are said to have been responsible for her elevation from the pit to the stage. Pepys tells us that Lord Buckhurst took her from the stage in July of 1667 ; if so, she was certainly back in August. There are various stories as to the King's infatuation for her at first sight. One is that when reciting an epilogue in a hat "of the circumference of a large coach wheel," her little figure looked so droll under it that Charles took her home in his coach to supper. Another story goes that she was befriended by Lady Castlemaine and lived for a time under the protection of that brother, or half-brother, of hers of whom we occasionally hear. This man was careful to keep her hidden from the King's eyes, but one night when he took her to the theatre Charles and the Duke of York were present, and being attracted by her witty tongue invited both her and her cavalier to supper. When it came to paying neither Charles nor his brother had sufficient money, and Mr. Villiers had to lose both his money and his mistress. This was the new rival with whom Lady Castlemaine had now to reckon, one whom she affected to despise because of her low birth, yet who angered her far more directly than Miss Stuart had done, for she mocked her openly, mimicked her scornful airs, and had so much more wit that she could always get the better of her in a heated argu-

ment. Years later Nell annoyed the Duchess of Portsmouth as much as she did Lady Castlemaine, and a pleasantly ridiculous story "was blazed about" concerning a deadly revenge the two dames took upon her. It was said that the King had given Nell Gwyn £20,000, which so angered Lady Cleveland (Barbara) and Madame Carwell (Louise) that they arranged a supper at Berkshire House, to which they invited their rival. As Nell was in the act of drinking, she was "suddenly almost choked with a napkin, of which she was since dead ; and this idle thing runs so hot that Mr. Philips asked me the truth of it, but I assured him I saw her yester night in the Park." Thus says one, writing to Sir Joseph Williamson ; it is beautifully vague, but the story probably highly interested and amused Society.

With Nell, Lady Castlemaine classed that other comedienne Moll Davies, whose daughter, Mary Tudor, had been born in 1663, and who had ever since kept up an intermittent friendship with Charles.

When Barbara found that anger, sulks, alternate kindness and harshness had no effect in causing Charles to break off his connection with these two, she determined to revenge herself by attracting Charles Hart to her side, Pepys telling us that "my Lady Castlemaine is mightily in love with Hart," that he is much with her in private, and that "she do give him many presents."

There is no doubt but that Barbara had to pay in a disagreeable manner for her many light deeds. It was in the spring of 1668 that a wave of indignation passed over working-class London at the loose life of the Court, it being expressed in raids made

by the apprentices upon all houses of ill-fame. This gave an excellent opportunity to the lampooners, and an ingenious libel was published purporting to be a humble petition from certain women to the "Most Splendid, Illustrious, Serene, and Eminent Lady of Pleasure, the Countess of Castlemaine." A few days later a pretended answer to this was published as coming from Lady Castlemaine herself. Such an event caused passion and tears, and to soothe the handsome termagant the King did the only thing he could do, made her a present. Thus Berkshire House, in St. James's, with its large grounds, fell into the hands of this snapper-up of valuable trifles. Two years later Barbara sold the house, also the garden for building plots, and kept only the south-west corner of the estate, on which was erected Cleveland House. We are still reminded of her when in St. James's by passing through Cleveland Court, Cleveland Square, or Cleveland Row.

Though the Duke and Duchess of Richmond were practically banished from Court, they had a powerful friend there in the person of the Queen, who really missed Frances, and who certainly found the atmosphere of her home too much charged with electricity by Lady Castlemaine. It may have been a desire for peace which made her approach the King as mediator between him and Richmond, with the result that while Frances was giving gorgeous entertainments at Somerset House, Charles made some calls upon her publicly, and in July, 1668, she became woman of the bed-chamber to Catherine.

Earlier in the year, however, she was attacked by smallpox, and some say was badly disfigured; but

the chief proof of this seems to be some remarks made by Pepys during her illness : she is “mighty full of small-pox, by which all do conclude that she will be wholly spoiled, which is the greatest instance of the uncertainty of beauty that could be in this age.” Four days later he writes : “I did see Mrs. Stuart’s picture as when a young maid, and now just done before her having the small-pox ; and it would make a man weep to see what she was then, and what she is like to be, by people’s discourse, now.” Later, however, he speaks of seeing her, describing her as of as noble a person as he ever saw, but her face considerably worse than it was by reason of the small-pox.

Marred or not, she again became a personage of the Court, and we hear again of the factions which attend her and Lady Castlemaine, and of how the King made midnight visits to her. One Sunday night he had ordered his coach to be ready to take him to the Park, but suddenly changed his mind, jumped into a boat, and either quite alone, or with but one attendant, rowed to Somerset House. There, finding the door into the garden locked, he clambered over the wall, so eager was he to see the Duchess. The meaning of this seems to be borne out by an assertion made by Lord Dartmouth, who tells of an incident when both the King and the Duke of Richmond were staying at Lord Townsend’s, in Norfolk. Richmond “as usual got beastly drunk,” and Charles, disgusted, told him openly that he had gained more kindness from Frances since her marriage than he had ever been able to persuade her to show him before. In 1670 the Duke was sent out of the way to Scotland,

and the following year he was made ambassador to Denmark, where he died at the end of 1672. His titles reverted by relationship to Charles II, who allowed a bounty of £150 to the widowed Duchess.

Frances continued many years at Court, and in 1670 we have an account of a “frolic” in which she attended the Queen. When staying at Audley End they, with the Duchess of Buckingham, dressed in country women’s clothes, went to the fair, Sir Bernard Gascoigne riding before them on a cart-horse. They did their best to talk in the country dialect, and went from one booth to another buying things. The Queen asked for a pair of garters for her sweetheart, and Sir Bernard hunted for a pair of gloves stitched with blue as a present for his sweetheart; but their dresses were such exaggerations of the local fashion, and their talk fell so short of local diction, that all the people at the fair gathered round, wondering who they were and thinking them play actors. At last some well-informed person recognized the Queen, and then they were mobbed by curious and good-humoured people. It was with great difficulty that the Royal party regained their horses, and as soon as they mounted every one in the fair who had a horse mounted and followed, and so escorted the Queen, much to her annoyance, back to her house.

One account tells us that Frances attended Mary of Modena at her accouchement in 1688, and signed the certificate before the Council; she was also at Anne’s coronation, and died a Roman Catholic in 1702. Those who would like to see a travesty of this famous beauty in her middle life will find the wax effigy made to carry in her funeral procession among

the waxworks in Westminster Abbey, dressed in the robes she wore at Anne's coronation.

From 1668 Barbara Castlemaine became so outrageous in her amours that Charles was actually ashamed of her. Jermyn and Hart were succeeded by Jack Churchill; and the Duke of Buckingham, between whom and Barbara existed both jealousy and hatred, played for her the traitorous part she had played for Miss Stuart. On one occasion when he knew that Churchill was with the too open-hearted mistress, he brought the King to call on some pretext. In horrified surprise Churchill jumped out of the window, but not before his Royal master recognized him, and called scornfully, "I forgive you, you do it for your bread."

If Barbara was rapacious for money she was liberal to the men whom she courted, and she gilded the pill of disgrace for this man with £5000; which, with characteristic caution, he used to purchase an annuity, thus laying the foundations of his fortunes. The story has been told to his discredit that years later when Barbara once lost heavily at basset, and asked him for half a crown—or as one account has it, for £20—that she might stake anew, he refused her, though he had £1000 lying on the table; but this has been described by a contemporary as "a piece of travelling scandal." When Barbara's last child, a girl, was born she was named Barbara Fitzroy, though the King knew that Churchill—or at least any one but himself—was her father.

Lady Castlemaine in monetary difficulties was, however, at times still rich compared with the King, for his poverty was occasionally a thing to cause many

tongues to wag. He gave to his woman as much as he could secure, and often paid his servants nothing for months ; they to supply their needs rifled his wardrobe, his plate-room, in fact, any part of the palace which they could safely attack. During one week in which Barbara lost £25,000 at basset it is recorded that Charles only had three white neckties, and not a single handkerchief. His very shirts took wings, and we read of foreign visitors coming to present themselves at Court so badly dressed that they would be rigged out in some of the King's own clothes before being allowed to appear before His Majesty. What a subject for musical comedy !

No wonder that the people, seeing where their money went, grew to hate the name of Lady Castlemaine, and on one occasion when she had gone to see the puppets at St. Bartholomew's fair a crowd collected round the booth to hiss at and annoy the King's "Miss." But when she came forth her beauty, her bright eyes and smiling lips, her expression of good comradeship made such an impression that in silent wonder they watched her enter her carriage and drive away. Her extravagance infuriated them as much as her immorality, for they knew that she had no right to the money she spent. Evelyn speaks of the gallantry or brave show of the ladies at the theatre being infinite, and that Lady Castlemaine—an adjective written before her name is erased in the printed book—wore jewels esteemed at £40,000 and more, "far outshining the Queen."

It was in 1670 that Charles did his best to be quit of a woman who had brought him more trouble than pleasure for ten years. The Chevalier de Gramont takes

the credit to himself of arranging the terms of agreement between them, and he names Jermyn and Jacob Hall, the rope-dancer, as the men who were the immediate cause of bitter raillery on the King's part, and on hers “of an impetuosity of temper which burst forth like lightning.” She told her monarch “that it very ill became him to throw out such reproaches against one, who, of all the women in England, deserved them the least ; that he had never ceased quarrelling thus unjustly with her, ever since he had betrayed his own mean inclinations ; that to gratify such a depraved taste as his, he wanted only such silly things as Stuart, Wells [a maid of honour], and that pitiful strolling actress [Nell Gwyn] whom he had lately introduced into their society.” Gramont continues : “Floods of tears, from rage, generally attended these storms ; after which, resuming the part of Medea, the scene closed with menaces of tearing her children to pieces and setting his palace on fire. What course could he pursue with such an outrageous fury, who, beautiful as she was, resembled Medea less than her dragons, when she was thus enraged ! ”

The end of this quarrel was that Barbara was created Baroness Nonsuch of Nonsuch Park, Surrey, Countess of Southampton, and Duchess of Cleveland, with remainder to her first and third natural sons, Charles and George “Palmer.” She also received the Park and Palace of Nonsuch. In return she was to abandon Jermyn for ever, she was never more to rail against Miss Wells, nor storm against the Duchess of Richmond.

Though Barbara still, in the interest of her children,

tried to keep the King's favour, she continued her attachments with other men.

It was about 1672 that William Wycherley, the dramatist, after the production of *Love in a Wood*, in which it is asserted that great wits and great braves have a flaw in their pedigree, happened to pass the Duchess in the coach drawn by eight 'in which she drove. Barbara stopped the coach and shouted some ribald remark to him about his mother, thus facetiously intimating that he was a great wit. From that time until he married Wycherley kept up a connection with her and received large sums of money.

There had been suggestions at various times that Barbara should be sent to Paris as a good way of disposing of her, and this actually happened in 1675, after a period during which she had exacted by the complaisance of the King enormous sums from various public sources. In Paris she was anything but popular, and consoled herself by carrying on an intrigue with the English ambassador, Ralph Montagu, whom a little later, because he transferred his affections from her to her daughter, Lady Sussex, she betrayed to Charles.

In the midst of this affair Charles wrote to remonstrate with her on the publicity of her acts, to which she replied : "I promise you that for my conduct it shall be such as that you nor nobody shall have occasion to blame me. And I hope you will be just to what you said to me, which was at my house when you told me you had letters of mine. You said, 'Madam, all that I ask of you for your own sake is, live so for the future as to make the least noise you can, and I care not who you love ! ' "

A few months before Charles's death she returned to England and commenced a liaison with the actor Cardell, or Cardonnell Goodman, who a year earlier had been convicted of an attempt to poison two of her sons. By him she had a son whom "the town christened Goodman Cleveland." Goodman is said to have refused to let the play begin until she appeared in the theatre, going to the front of the stage even when Royalty was present to inquire loudly whether his Duchess had arrived.

Lord Castlemaine, who had long ago divorced his wife and married again, died in 1705; and then Barbara, having suffered much from public indifference and from being obliged to sink more or less into obscurity, and who was then sixty-four, married Beau Feilding. This man, who was famed, as Barbara had been, for his beauty, was fifteen years younger than she and a pertinacious fortune-hunter. It is impossible to be anything but amused to know that it was now Barbara the Termagant who had to knuckle under to a mind more coarse and ferocious than her own. Her curses did not count against Feilding's deeper, wider range of language, and threats of violence were useless against the fact of violence itself. When Barbara was not as generous as he wished Feilding felt no hesitation about beating her and ill-using her to such an extent that she became not only very ill, but terrified, for "handsome Feilding," as Charles once dubbed him, openly said he would as soon kill her as kill a dog, and she feared him so much that it was long before she dared seek the protection of the law. Even when he was being tried at the Old Bailey, before Lord Chief Justice Holt, she would not speak against him until

he had been removed from the Court. He was committed to Newgate, but to the despair of Barbara, who feared his vengeful violence, was released on bail.

Then came an unexpected deliverance. The Duke of Grafton, Barbara's grandson, received a communication from a woman named Mary Wadsworth, who claimed the name of Feilding, and when all the truth came out it was found that a few weeks before Lady Cleveland married the Beau he had been united to a person whom he believed to be a Mrs. Deleau, a rich widow. But as he had promised a go-between £500 to effect the introduction he had been cheated, and a woman of doubtful character presented to him as the willing and wealthy Mrs. Deleau. As soon as he found out the fraud, he used dire threats of violence to his wife and the match-maker and pursued his courtship of the Duchess. So once more Robert Feilding was tried, this time before a full bench, found guilty of bigamy, and sentenced to be branded in the hand. This sentence was, however, remitted, and Beau Feilding passed the rest of his life with Mary Wadsworth in rooms in Scotland Yard, where he had lived in the height of his best days.

The last dramatic scene in Barbara's life was when the Ecclesiastical Court pronounced the decree of divorce in May, 1707. Contrary to custom, the official who read it out stood up, out of deference to her and her sons. "And then the Duchess of Cleveland leaving the court, she was led through Westminster Hall by the Duke of Northumberland [her son], having a tipstaff to clear the way for her to her coach, and respected all through the hall by the gentle-

men, while Feilding was ignominiously hooted out of Palace Yard." She lived about two and a half years longer in retirement at Chiswick, dying of dropsy on October 9th, 1709, her last words being, "Give me back my beauty." At least so it has been written. The little that remained of the fabulous sums of money which had passed through her hands she left to her grandson, the Duke of Grafton.

CHAPTER V

MRS. JANE MIDDLETON

“ What you design by nature’s law
Is fleeting inclination ;
That willy-wisp bewilds us a’
By its infatuation.
When that goes out, caresses tire
And love’s no more in season,
Though weakly we blow up the fire
With all our boasted reason.”

Allan Ramsay.

A LADY whose name would not have lived through the centuries had it not been for the portrait of her by Lely, and the short account of her character by Gramont, was Mrs. Jane Middleton, who was the eldest daughter of Sir Robert Needham and his second wife, he being a relative of Evelyn the diarist.

Jane Needham was born in Lambeth at the end of 1645, and grew up a very beautiful girl, being so attractive that at the early age of fifteen she captivated and married a man ten years older than herself, named Charles Middleton. He was not a rich man, though he had an estate in Denbighshire called Plâs Baddy. That his father, Sir Thomas Middleton, was also of no great wealth is shown by the fact that he only left his children a sum of £100 a year each.

To Charles and Jane Middleton two daughters were born, one at the end of 1661, when the mother



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(*After Lely*)

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was just sixteen, and the second, who was given the curious name of Althamia, two or three years later,—however there is some slight evidence that the latter was the daughter of Ralph Montagu, afterwards Duke of Montagu.

In the beginning of January, 1662–3, the Chevalier de Gramont came to London to pass his enforced exile from the French Court. He had had the temerity, not for love, but for the sake of idleness and contrariety, to attempt to attract one of the mistresses of Louis XIV, and though the King cared little more for the lady than did the Chevalier, the latter found himself a banished man. He brought with him to this country a certain way of regarding women which was different from that customary among Englishmen. The latter, attracted by this or that face, would perhaps pursue the owner, but Gramont set himself in cold blood to seek some one to whom to pay attention. When he first arrived he was enthusiastic about the beauty he saw around him. “As for the Beauties, you could not look anywhere without seeing them; there were the Countess of Castlemaine, Lady Chesterfield, Lady Shrewsbury, Mrs. Roberts, Mrs. Middleton, the Miss Brookes, and a thousand others, who shone at Court with equal lustre; but it was Miss Hamilton and Miss Stuart who were its chief ornaments.” Thus reported this ardent and general lover, and it may have been because he saw so little of Mrs. Middleton that he was induced to go in search of her.

The young wife was then just seventeen, and a little silly. It is curious that at that period men who were in their prime or growing old treated girls

in their teens as women of experience. Nowhere in the Memoirs have we any idea that the woman who talked sentimental nonsense and tried to pose as a wit was a youthful creature who really had not learned the meaning of wit or wisdom. Yet she was no innocent girl ; even if she had been it would probably not have interfered with the Frenchman's intentions. He was not so much a lover as a lover of intrigue, and St. Evremond, his noted friend, once gave him a description of his own character which was most apt and true. "Is it not a fact that as soon as a woman pleases you your first care is to find out whether she has any other lover, and your second how to plague her ; for the gaining her affection is the last thing in your thoughts ? You seldom engage in intrigue but to disturb the happiness of others."

To such discourses as these the Chevalier listened amusedly, while his thoughts were really engaged in wondering to whom he could offer his love, and for some idle reason he decided upon Mrs. Middleton. She was one of the handsomest women in town, and the fact that she was not then closely connected with the everyday life of the popular monarch was probably an added inducement, as de Gramont might well be a little nervous of once more inflaming against himself the wrath of a king.

Of Charles Middleton we hear little, his coquettish wife being content to let him occupy the background while she discoursed of poetry, Plato, and sentiment to the fine gallants who came to pay her homage ; feeling happy in her magnificent dresses and always anxious to vie with those who possessed the greatest fortunes.

As a preliminary step to the gaining of her favour, Gramont made friends with a Mr. Jones, afterwards the one and only Earl of Ranelagh, who had been wildly in love with Mrs. Middleton. He, finding that the valuable presents which either the lady expected or he thought fit to give were becoming too serious a drain on his expenses, was glad to welcome help in throwing off his responsibility. Mr. Jones might easily have terminated his intrigue without resorting to any finesse, but he had another rival whom he hated, and he preferred to go on bearing the burden to calmly giving way to a man not of his choosing. Thus he welcomed the Chevalier with both hands, introduced him to Mrs. Middleton, and did all he could to smooth the way.

De Gramont followed up his first meeting with letters, presents, and visits ; he held long conversations which bored him, ogled and was ogled in return, but he got no further. Mrs. Middleton was ravished with his presents, all of which she took, though, as she gave nothing but sweet smiles in return, the Chevalier grew tired of the pursuit. Of her character and appearance he says : "She was fair, well made and delicate, in manner somewhat precise and affected, giving herself indolent, languishing airs, and extremely anxious to pass as a wit. She wearied by trying to explain sentiments which she did not understand, and she bored while trying to entertain."

It is not astonishing that the would-be lover sought relief from her affectations in the society of Miss Warmestre, maid of honour to the Queen, a girl who was in many ways just the opposite to Mrs. Middleton, with a brown complexion, sparkling eyes,

and tempting looks. So perfumed gloves, pocket looking-glasses, apricot paste, essences, and other frivolities arrived every week from Paris, while more valuable things, such as ear-rings, diamonds, and golden guineas, were to be found in London, and were passed on to one or the other of the two ladies.

It was quite likely that the versatile Frenchman would have entirely forgotten Mrs. Middleton had not Mr. Jones notified him that a new rival had arisen in the person of the Hon. Mr. Montagu, who was much to be feared for his wit and his assiduity. That was quite sufficient to awaken the dying ardour, in which there was no love, for Gramont could only think of how best to be avenged, and tried to find some way which malice could suggest to torment both lady and gallant. First he thought to return her letters and demand his presents back as an introductory measure, but feeling that that was too weak a course, “he was upon the point of conspiring the destruction of poor Mrs. Middleton” when there burst upon his vision the beautiful Miss Hamilton. From that moment Middleton, Warmestre, revenge all melted from his mind as though they had never been; no longer was he inconstant, no longer did his glances roam: “this object fixed them all.”

It is said that Mrs. Middleton was kinder both to Mr. Jones and to Mr. Montagu than she was to Gramont; and there was at one time much gossip as to her receiving the attentions of the Duke of York, who in a quieter way was more objectionable in his love affairs than was the King. Pepys learned that this was a mistake, and that the Duke did not

want her and could have plenty others, and so forth. But that again was gossip, and in any case Mrs. Middleton's portrait was included in the gallery of Beauties painted by Lely, for which the Duchess of York paid the reckoning !

Pepys alludes several times to this lady. In church one day it pleased him most of all to see the fair Mrs. Middleton, " who indeed is a very beautiful lady." He always loved the favoured of the great, and his admiration grew with the favour shown them. Evelyn calls her an incomparable beauty, and adds the information that in the art of painting (in oils) she was rare. Waller, the poet, dangled after her, writing her many letters, and the very youthful William Russell, the young stepbrother of the two Brooke girls, was said also to be her lover.

Some time in 1668 Mr. Middleton took a house in Charles Street, St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, which was just then becoming a very fashionable locality, and whence his lively wife made many conquests. She is often mentioned in the letters addressed by the French ambassador in London to one or other of his chiefs in Paris; for while Charles was the paid dependent of Louis every incident of the English Court was noted, and the information was sent either direct to Louis or to him through one of his ministers. One of these ambassadors (for they changed every few years) was Honoré Courtin, Seigneur de Chanteroine, who came to England in May, 1676, and was greatly taken with Mrs. Middleton. In his letters to France he mentioned her often. " If I were younger, or less wise than I have become through your good example, I could enjoy myself very well over here.

Madame Mazarin and the Duchess of Sussex [daughter of Charles and Barbara] came to dine with me to-day ; I had near me Mrs. Middleton, who is the most beautiful woman in the kingdom. I took them after dinner to hear the French musicians, and then I walked with them through St. James's Park at eleven o'clock, where I met the poor ambassador from Portugal, who is dying for the Duchess Mazarin."

Though Mrs. Middleton was very jealous of the Duchess of Portsmouth and did all she could to belittle her, she yet accepted her hospitality when expedient, and Courtin mentions Louise giving a splendid dinner to the French Embassy, to which Mrs. Middleton, the Prince of Monaco, Sunderland, and "our people" were invited. The King, who had dined with the Queen, dropped in towards the end of the dinner, and was pleased to say that he would not only dine in the same place with the same company the next Sunday, but would go without his supper the evening before that his appetite might be good !

Courtin could not mention Mrs. Middleton without praising her. "She is of all English women the one whom I have most pleasure in seeing, but she is surrounded by watch-dogs." Again he wrote to Louvois : "I am going to call on Mrs. Middleton, whom I more than ever regard as the most beautiful and amiable woman at Court. I would give her all your money if she would listen to overtures from me, but she once refused a purse containing fifteen hundred jacobuses which M. de Gramont offered her. Thus you need have no fear about the money." Gramont leads us to suppose anything but that the seductive dame would refuse a purseful of jacobuses,

and it is impossible not to wonder whether it was the Chevalier or the lady who told the truth.

To this letter Louvois responded that he had so often heard of the beauty of Mrs. Middleton from Gramont that he was most anxious to have her portrait, to which the lady replied that she was extremely gratified and had the copy of a picture sent him. She also carried her campaign against the heart of Courtin so far that he was regretfully forced to acknowledge that he was forty-nine and suffering from the fogs of London. “If I were at your age I do not believe that I could prevent myself from becoming foolishly amorous. I have never seen a woman in any foreign country who appears to me so amiable. She is very beautiful, she has the most distinguished air, it would be impossible to show more spirit than she possesses, and yet she is modest and true.” Mrs. Middleton was at this time very popular with all those attending the French Embassy, for other writers remark upon it, Dorothy Sunderland (Sacharissa) telling how one day she saw the ambassadors bring a coach full of Frenchmen to Mrs. Middleton’s, and sent it back to fetch more.

It was Mrs. Middleton who helped to bring about at least a truce between the Duchess of Portsmouth and Duchess Mazarin, by inviting herself and a friend to dinner with the ambassador, the friend being the Duchess of Portsmouth, while Lady Harvey also invited herself and took Hortense Mazarin. This was a good act done in haste, for which Mrs. Middleton repented at leisure, for when she acquired the ambition of elevating—or lowering—her young daughter, then maid of honour to Mary Beatrice, to the rank of

King's mistress, she could not be spiteful enough against Louise, Duchess of Portsmouth.

She seized the opportunity when Louise de Kéroualle was pretending to be desperately ill in order to revive the King's affections, to introduce the girl, who was sixteen or seventeen, to Charles's notice, and she had even got so far as taking her to see the King in his cabinet when news of this and of other attempts by other ladies to fill her post brought Louise quickly from her bed to fight her own battles in a more straightforward way. She soon stopped the little visits to the cabinet, and thereby earned the undying hatred of Mrs. Middleton, who threw all her influence on the side of Louise's rival, the Duchess Mazarin. This little skirmish became public property, and in 1679 a poem appeared with the title, "Cullam with his Flock of Misses," which devoted flippant couplets to the various ladies who were offering themselves as candidates for the Duchess of Portsmouth's place, the second on the list being Mrs. Middleton. The first was the Duchess of Richmond; then came various other names, the last but one being Lady Cleveland, and the last Lady Katherine—probably Lady Elizabeth*—Jones being the successful aspirant. The rhyme about Jane Middleton runs :

"Next Middleton appear'd to view,
Who straight was told of M——gue,
Of cates from Hyde, of clothes from France,
At which the Court set up a laughter,
She only pleads but for her daughter ;

* Lady Katherine Jones was married, while her sister Elizabeth was then about the Court.

† This line is lost, as it was said to be unrepeatable in the more respectable age following that of the Stuarts.

A buxom lass, fit for the place,
Were not her father * in disgrace.
With these exceptions she's dismissed,
And Morland fair enters the list."

There is little doubt that the Hyde alluded to was Laurence, brother to the Duchess of York, and afterwards Lord Rochester. Of this friendship there is mention made in one of the State Poems called "The Rabble."

" Not for the nation, but the fair,
Our treasury provides ;
Bulkeley's † Godolphin's only care,
As Middleton is Hyde's."

Waller seems eventually to have given up at one and the same time both his Sacharissa and Mrs. Middleton, for Dorothea, Countess Dowager of Sunderland, writes : " Mrs. Middleton and I have lost old Waller ; he is gone away frightened."

Miss Berry says that Jane Middleton took, after a youth of folly, to an old age of cards, but this assertion seems to have been based on a little skit written by St. Evremond, in which Mrs. Middleton, Madame Mazarin, Mr. Villiers, and Mr. Bowcher are represented as playing a game of basset.

Mr. Middleton was Secretary at the Prize Office, a post worth only about four hundred a year ; yet when he was said to be dying, in 1690, there were many to covet that position, small as it was. Among them was a member of Lady Anglesey's family, but that lady, who did the begging, said she could not ask for its reversion, as she was on such intimate terms

* Ralph Montagu was at this time in disgrace, and it was generally believed that he was the girl's parent.

† Sophia Stuart Bulkeley, sister to the Duchess of Richmond.

with Mrs. Middleton, and feared to seem unkind. She, however, begged Lady Russell to use her influence. Mr. Middleton died the following year. His eldest daughter married Charles May, an equerry to Queen Mary, and son or near relative to the notorious Baptist May, who rivalled Chiffinch in the attentions which he showed the King. Mrs. May died at Twickenham, and was buried at Hampton. Mrs. Middleton died some time in 1692 after a long illness, "having preserved her wonderful beauty to the last," and was buried at Lambeth. As she was only about forty-seven, there is really nothing to be surprised at in the fact that she was still good-looking. Her picture can scarcely be deemed to do her justice, for it does not seem to display any extraordinary beauty. There is, however, all evidence that Lely, in his hurry and self-satisfaction, thought more of his painting than of the individual who was sitting to him. "Good, but not like," was one of Pepys' criticisms upon his maids-of-honour portraits, and it is only necessary to hear the comments of those who see the pictures in the Court to comprehend the effect they make. "They are all alike!" is the general cry. That may seem so at first, and yet to one who knows them well they are all different, with a difference which is slurred over by the mannerisms of the painter, who, in answer to a friend's query, once affirmed that he knew he was no painter, but he also knew that he was the best that England had. This portrait was painted in 1663, when Jane was in her eighteenth year, and knowing her silliness, we need not be surprised at her somewhat vacuous expression.

Both St. Evremond and Charles de St. Denis

wrote verses upon Jane Middleton's death and grave, the latter saying that she had virtues for faithful friends, charms for lovers, was ill without anxiety, and resolved to die without trouble or effort.

Jane's youngest sister, Eleanor, born in 1650, was also a Beauty, and for years held the position of mistress to the Duke of Monmouth, giving him four children, who all took the name of Crofts. She had a house among the nobility in Great Russell Street, Bloomsbury, and was there in 1683, but a few months later Lady Wentworth, with her youth, beauty, and passionate love, had supplanted her with Monmouth. Eleanor later married a private gentleman.

CHAPTER VI.

MARY, COUNTESS OF FALMOUTH

“Lely on animated canvas stole
The sleepy eye that spoke the melting soul.”

Pope.

AMONG the pictures by Lely at Hampton Court are two which for many years bore wrong names, but which have since been identified. One, a portrait of a beautiful young woman with dark, slightly arched brows, is Mary, the Countess of Falmouth, the only daughter who lived to maturity of Colonel Harvey Bagot, of Pipe Hayes, Aston, in Warwickshire. Colonel Bagot's first wife bore him a son and daughter, Arden and Mary; his second wife one daughter, named Elizabeth, who died as an infant. This is mentioned because there has been some confusion between these two girls, the picture in Hampton Court being generally written of as representing Elizabeth, Countess Falmouth.

Mary Bagot was born in 1645, and in September, 1660, was appointed one of the four maids of honour to Anne, Duchess of York, the only one of them, according to Gramont, who was really possessed of virtue and beauty. “She had beautiful and regular features, and that sort of brown complexion which, when in perfection, is so particularly fascinating, and more especially in England, where it is uncommon.



MARY BAGOT, COUNTESS OF FALMOUTH

(*After Lely*)

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There was an involuntary blush almost continually upon her cheek, without having anything to blush for."

There is curiously little to say about the girl's life, her quiet disposition preventing notoriety; but she became attracted by Charles Berkeley, whose name has already appeared in these pages in connection with a dishonourable act. It may have been that the bond which drew them together was their devotion to the Stuart cause, for both came of ardent Royalist families. Charles Berkeley had fought with James in the Spanish campaigns, and was loved as much by Charles as by his brother. It was he who, under the guise of loyalty, so lightly and cruelly defamed Anne Hyde, by falsely declaring that he himself had been her lover, in order to prevent James from owning the marriage contract between himself and Anne. Later, when he found his evil intention to be of no avail, Berkeley as lightly owned that his confession had been all a lie. Anne forgave him for this disgraceful deed, but her father always hated him, calling him "a fellow of great wickedness."

In courage lay Berkeley's real virtue—all who wrote of him are agreed upon that point—and Sir W. Coventry spoke of his good nature, generosity, and desire for public good, as well as of his "low thoughts of his own wisdom." That he was deeply loved by King Charles is quite evident, and there can be little doubt that the services he rendered his sovereign were often such as no self-respecting man would perform. Burnet says of him that he was without any visible merit, unless it was that of the managing the King's amours; that he was as much in the favour of the

Duke as of the King, was generous in his expenses, and that if he had outlived the lewdness of that time and come to a more sedate course of life he might have put the King on great and noble designs. Gramont, however, gives him nothing but praise, but then, Berkeley had flattered the Frenchman's vanity by humbly adoring the lady whom the Chevalier coolly determined to marry in face of all odds. Of him Gramont says : " Never did disinterestedness so perfectly characterize the greatness of the soul : he had no views but what tended to the glory of his master ; his credit was never employed but in advising him to reward services, or to confer favours on merit : so polished in conversation, that the greater his power, the greater was his humility ; and so sincere in all his proceedings that he would never have been taken for a courtier."

Gramont also owed to Berkeley the offer of a pension of fifteen hundred jacobuses, made with the kindly words, " You must not be obliged to me. I come from the King's *coucher*, where all the discourse was about you ; and I can assure you that the manner in which the King spoke of you could not afford you so much pleasure as I myself felt upon the occasion." When the Frenchman refused this kindness, which he did not think it proper to accept, Berkeley took some trouble to acquaint the French ambassador with what had passed, that the account might soften the resentment which Gramont's sovereign still showed towards him. It is probable that, when Berkeley wished, he had that perfection of manner which makes a person irresistible, though there were times when Pepys was justified not only in praising him for his wit, but for

saying that he was of no good nature, and not a man “ordinarily to be dealt with.”

It was not long after the Restoration that Sir Charles Berkeley was raised to the peerage as Earl of Falmouth.

Elizabeth Hamilton, who, though tinged in manner by the loose ways of the Court, always bore a reputation beyond reproach, was probably quite the most attractive person at the various festivals, and it was the correct thing for every man to fall in love with her. Lord Falmouth was no exception ; he, however, felt that he had no chance whatever with the courted beauty, and very sensibly looked around for another mate. Thus it was not long before he regarded Mary Bagot with the eyes of a lover, and though she had no fortune he made her Countess of Falmouth in 1664, the Queen appointing her a lady of the Bedchamber on her marriage.

Another maid of honour, Miss Hobart, had at first formed a great attachment for Mary Bagot, who did not return the tenderness, so there is probably a certain amount of spite in the following description given by Miss Hobart to the girl who filled the place left vacant by Mary. “Lady Falmouth is the only instance of a maid of honour well married without a portion ; and if you were to ask her poor, weak husband for what reason he married her, I am persuaded that he can assign none, unless it be her great red ears and broad feet.” Such an assertion must have been inspired either by jealousy or by a natural delight in malicious gossip ; and yet such ill-natured speeches may have been the fashion of the day, for this was a time in which not only jealous women but able men

uttered or wrote the most horrible libels upon all who in any way tempted their satire.

Of the married life of Lord and Lady Falmouth little is known ; it should have been happy, as the match was disinterested ; but it was of very short duration. Early in 1665 Charles Berkeley arranged to go with the Duke of York to serve in the first Dutch war. Why he went is differently accounted for ; his loyalty and affection for the Duke, his love of action, or a desire for advancement are among the motives given as animating him.

At the battle of Southwold Bay, on the 3rd of June, 1665, he stood near the Duke on the deck of the *Royal Charles*, and with him were Lord Muskerry and Richard Boyle ; a cannon shot killed the three, but left James unhurt. It is said that their blood and brains bespattered the Duke, while Boyle's head struck him down. This event Sir John Denham described in satirical vein and somewhat weak lines in his “Poem on State Affairs” :

“Falmouth was there, I know not what to act ;
Some say 'twas to grow Duke too by contract ;
An untaught bullet, in its wanton scope,
Dashes him all to pieces, and his hope.
Such was his rise, such was his fall, unpraised ;
A chance-shot sooner took him than chance raised :
His shattered head the fearless Duke distains,
And gave the last first proof that he had brains.”

We may suppose that this event distressed Lady Falmouth, but she was not one of the obtrusive Beauties of her day, and she seems to have lived her life without drawing much public attention to it. The King, however, is recorded as being terribly troubled. Clarendon says : “No sorrow was equal—

at least no sorrow so remarkable, as the King's was for the Earl of Falmouth. They who knew His Majesty best, and had seen how unshaken he had stood in other very terrible assaults, were amazed at the floods of tears he shed upon this occasion." Pepys also reports that Charles was much troubled at the death of Falmouth ; but he adds that he had met no other man who wished him to be alive again, for the world conceived him to be a man of too much pleasure to do the King any good, or offer any good office to him. Pepys rarely said ill of a person without tempering his hardness with mercy, so he adds : " But I hear of all hands he is confessed to be a man of great honour, that did show it in this, his going with the Duke, the most that ever any man did."

There were many conflicting stories about the poverty of the Falmouths. James once declared that, though not extravagant, Lord Falmouth died not worth a farthing. But in his will—dated April 21, 1665—Lord Falmouth bequeathed his landed estates to his father and his heirs male ; £8000 to his expected child (who, if a boy, would have stood in the place of heir) ; £2000 to his brother, Sir William ; £1000 to his sister Jane, and his house at Ridlington, in Rutlandshire, with the residue of his personality to his wife.

In 1673, when the King was seeking for an estate with which to endow his son, Henry Fitzroy, on his betrothal to Isabella Bennet, he bought of Lady Falmouth Grafton Park, or, to put it in the words of the chronicler, a sum of £11,289 was given "to the Countess of Falmouth without account, in consideration of the surrender of Grafton Park, etc." There

exists, however, a vague hint that this transaction was one of the disgraceful and hidden things of Charles's life, that the Park belonged, in fact, to the Queen, but was bestowed temporarily by the King upon some favourite, for though it was eventually given to Arlington and Henry Fitzroy, it could not be settled upon them until "after Her Majesty's death."

Lady Falmouth's child, a girl also named Mary, was born later in the year, and in her fresh youth was married with pomp at Westminster Abbey.

A year after her husband's death Lady Falmouth was the subject of Pepys' pen, he calling her a pretty woman, and explaining that she was now in the second or third stage of her mourning for her husband, repeating that she was pretty pleasant in her looks.

Like all the other women of the Court, Lady Falmouth seems to have flirted considerably with the little wretch Henry Jermyn, so much so that the report was all abroad that a marriage was arranged between them, a report that was sufficient to upset the whole of Charles's household. For Lady Castlemaine was much in love with Jermyn, and in a terrible rage at the idea of his marriage, while the King was jealous of Jermyn in relation to Barbara ; and when these two great people were out of temper the whole Court suffered. However, the report was wrong ; Lady Falmouth remained a widow for thirteen or fourteen years. What her life was during that period is only discoverable from stray hints. Her name was mentioned in connection with the Duke of York when he was a widower, for James had intimated that he wished to wed a Catholic and one with whom he could enjoy all the happiness of domestic life. It is

said that all the belles of the Court bedizened themselves in their precious stones and other finery, and among them, desirous of making a conquest of the Duke, was Lady Falmouth. "But," said the French ambassador in writing to Louis of France, "I doubt whether this Prince's passion for her is so great as to lead him to marry her. He would rather take a French princess, to whom His Majesty might give a dowry."

There is also more than one allusion to large sums of money given by King Charles to Lady Falmouth. Monsieur Forneron, who gained his information from French State papers—that is to say, from information sent by French emissaries in London to Louis—tells us that Charles paid her in one way and another immense sums. While another authority mentions that she received £8000 in a few months. There is no reason given for these payments, though certain inferences must be drawn from the way in which the statement fits into its context. Lady Falmouth may have been one of the most virtuous of women, or she may have lived as most of the women about the Court of Charles II seem to have lived. Dryden and Mulgrave, in their "Essay on Satire," are, however, slashing in their condemnation of her, but they were caricaturists as well as satirists, and were inclined to magnify all the faults while they minimized every virtue possessed by their victims, showing that even their virtues leaned to failing's side.

At the end of 1678 Lady Falmouth became the wife of a man who had been a greater rake than her first husband, but who was then settling down to that quiet delight in literature and literary society which

has caused his name to be remembered—Charles Sackville, Earl of Dorset. It was a second marriage which did not last a year, for Lady Dorset died in September, 1679, in giving birth to a child which was buried with her at Withyam, in Sussex. For curiosity's sake, the much-quoted passage from the “Essay on Satire” is appended :

“Thus Dorset purring like a thoughtful cat,
Married ; but wiser puss ne'er thought of that :
And first he worried her with railing rhyme,
Like Pembroke's mastiffs at his kindest time ;
Then for one night sold all his slavish life,
A teeming widow,* but a barren wife ;
Swell'd by contact of such a fulsome toad,
He lugg'd about the matrimonial load ;
Till fortune, kindly blind as well as he,
Has ill restored him to his liberty,
Which he would use in his old sneaking way,
Drinking all night and dosing all the day ;
Dull as Ned Howard, whom his brisker times
Had famed for dulness in malicious rhymes.”

* Compare the second of Pope's “Moral Essays.” “A teeming mistress, but a barren bride,” in the “Essay on Woman.”

CHAPTER VII

ELIZABETH HAMILTON, COUNTESS GRAMONT

“Lely painted them, and employed all his skill in the performance ; nor could he ever exert himself upon more beautiful subjects. Every picture appeared a master-piece ; and that of Miss Hamilton appeared the highest finished. Lely himself acknowledged that he had drawn it with a particular pleasure. The Duke of York took a delight in looking at it, and began again to ogle the original : he had very little reason to hope for success ; and at the same time his hopeless passion alarmed the Chevalier de Gramont.”—*Memoirs of Count Gramont.*

WHEN Charles II returned to his own land, there came over from Paris and other towns in France a number of those who had spent years of their lives abroad waiting for some turn in the tide which would allow them to come back to England. Among these were Sir George Hamilton, fourth son of the Earl of Abercorn, with his wife, who was sister to the Earl of Ormond, and a large family of sons and daughters who had been living for some years at the Feullatines, in the Fauxbourg St. Jacques, Paris. Elizabeth, the eldest girl, was then nineteen years old, and it might with far more justice have been said about her at her first appearance at Court, than about little Frances Stuart, that she was at the height of her beauty ; she certainly made an extraordinary impression upon the hearts of the men. Before she left France Sir John Reresby had met and been greatly attracted by her, and he wrote in his journal that he

liked her so well that after her return to England “I had probably married her, had not my friends strongly opposed it, she being a papist, and her fortune not being great at present.” But the fact was that Sir John was not a constant lover, for between seeing Miss Hamilton in France and meeting her again in England he had met a certain Mistress Brown, who made him forget every one else.

The Hamiltons did not arrive in England until early in 1661, and as Elizabeth married towards the end of 1663, she had in all not quite three years of gaiety at the English Court. Her position there was better than that of the maids of honour, for she had no official post, though she was expected to take part in all the revels and dances and other festivities which were arranged.

It seems as though every unmarried man of note proposed to La Belle Hamilton, by which title she soon came to be known. The Duke of Richmond, seeking a second wife, was very much in love with her, and yet, like the friends of Sir John Reresby, was somewhat held back by that grievous lack of fortune with which the lady was afflicted. Henry Jermyn, so often mentioned already, was also a wooer. Then there was Henry Howard, later Duke of Norfolk, who was followed by Richard Talbot, afterwards Earl of Tyrconnel and husband of the lively Frances Jennings. The two Russells, uncle and nephew, were also applicants for her hand. But one of her earliest English admirers was James, Duke of York, who was of too licentious a character to make an elegant adorer of a pretty, sensible girl. Lastly came the Chevalier de Gramont, who appeared at the



ELIZABETH HAMILTON, COUNTESS OF GRAMONT

(*After Lely*)

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English Court towards the end of the year 1662. He saw Miss Hamilton occasionally, but until the night of the ball at which he intended to be revenged upon Mrs. Middleton, he had had no close view of her, and then, though he was quite forty years of age, he fell headlong in love, and, if he may be believed, was for a year constant to the object of his adoration,—his first and last taste of the sweets of constancy.

The description of La Belle Hamilton, which is to be found in the Memoirs of the Count de Gramont, written by the hand of her brother, Anthony Hamilton, when the debonair Chevalier was an old man, is well worth repeating. “She had the finest shape, the loveliest neck, and the most beautiful arms in the world ; she was majestic and graceful in all her movements ; and she was the original after which all the ladies copied in their taste and air of dress. Her forehead was open, white, and smooth ; her hair was well set, and fell with ease into that natural order which it is so difficult to imitate ; her complexion was possessed of a certain freshness, not to be equalled by borrowed colours ; her eyes were not large, but they were lively, and capable of expressing whatever she pleased ; her mouth was full of graces, and her contour uncommonly perfect : nor was her nose, which was small, delicate, and turned up, the least ornament of so lovely a face. In fine, her air, her carriage, and the numberless graces dispersed over her whole person, made the Chevalier de Gramont not doubt but that she was possessed of every other qualification.”

She is further represented as neither endeavouring after wit nor affecting solemnity, as being reserved, just, and having an admirable discernment, noble in

sentiment and modest. Gramont set himself with all the art he possessed to engage her attention, but was embarrassed to find that presents were of no use ; and his man Termes, whom he had been sending periodically to Paris to get the little frivolities for Mrs. Middleton and Miss Warmestre, more or less lost his occupation. In spite of the many admirers hovering round Miss Hamilton, the Chevalier felt no jealousy or anxiety, knowing not only the characters of his rivals, but the tastes of the fair lady.

The Duke of York seems to have been but a heavy, uninteresting lover, and really made a mistake in seeking her kindness, for she was not the sort of girl to suit him in any way. He dared not say what was in his mind, and he had nothing else to say ; so after hunting or amusing himself all the morning, he would lounge about in the afternoon, talk to her as often as he could think of some subject for conversation, and ogle her with great assiduity. Elizabeth listened to his stories of fox and horse, to the accounts of broken legs and arms and other adventures ; she could not rudely run away from the Royal bore, but she could hardly be sorry when the fresh air and exercise weighted his lids in sleep and put an end to the silly, soft glances which he lavished upon her. The Duchess of York watched the little comedy with equanimity, probably wishing that James would always fall in love with so safe a subject, and she treated Elizabeth with affection and esteem.

Miss Hamilton had one failing, at least, to-day we should consider it in the light of a failing, though in the middle of the seventeenth century it seems to have been regarded as a virtue. She was fond of

playing practical jokes of a somewhat unkind nature, but it is evident that the whole Court was intensely amused by them. There was a certain fancy-dress ball given by the Queen at a time when she was doing her utmost to please the King by her compliance and gaiety, and at this ball the young lady managed thoroughly to divert the Court, and just as thoroughly to annoy a few unimportant people. De Gramont himself too tells a story about his own dress for the occasion which is well worth incorporating in the account of the ball.

One of Anne's maids of honour was a girl named Blague, who was remarkable for the insipidity of her appearance. Her complexion was the same all over, her hair was very light, and she possessed two little hollow eyes with white eyelashes "as long as a finger"; indeed, the malicious Gramont would make the poor girl appear as foolish as she was colourless, though there is nothing but his description to foster the idea.

Another woman who often came to Court was Lady Muskerry, a cousin of Elizabeth Hamilton's, whose unfortunate appearance should have been enough to save her from ridicule, and, indeed, might have done so if she had shown a sense of fitness, and had not always been ready to do absurd things. Lady Muskerry was ugly in figure, being stout, and plain in countenance, while of two short legs one was considerably shorter than the other. As she was very rich she had, in spite of these disadvantages, easily found a husband, and might have been happy enough but for her love of dress and dancing. Dress with her did not mean good taste, but a riot of colour and jewels, so that every one expected to be amused by her appearance

alone. Thus it was that on occasions of dignity her name was liable to be intentionally left out when invitations were issued.

Queen Catherine took much thought about this ball or masquerade ; she definitely named those who were to dance, commanding each to represent a nation by dress, and she made these arrangements in time to allow of the most elaborate preparations. Lady Muskerry was not invited to dance, and when she fussed at not getting a full invitation, her husband, who was a sensitive, serious man, much less distressed by his wife's homeliness of appearance than by the ridiculous figure she made when decked out for a party, gave her a little homily, begging her to be content with being a spectator at this entertainment, and pointing out as gently as he could that she was not of the appearance to look well in such circumstances ; and he ended by expressly forbidding her to try to get a place in the dance. When he had gone out the silly little woman fretted and fumed over the matter, persuading herself that her husband had influenced the Queen to refrain from inviting her, and even considering whether she would not throw herself at Catherine's feet and demand justice. In the midst of this turmoil a messenger brought an invitation, at which she was so overjoyed that she kissed it three times, then ordered her coach to find out how a Princess of Babylon dressed, for such was the character assigned her. One wonders if she ever knew that this card had been forged by Miss Hamilton in order to divert herself and those in the secret with the result.

It is well that we do not always see ourselves as

others see us, though at times we might be saved some sorrow if we had some idea as to popular opinion about us. Fortunately or unfortunately for the colourless Miss Blague, she was quite content with her own appearance, and was ready to accept any flattery that might be offered her. She therefore believed that a Frenchman at the Court, the Marquis de Brisacier, was desperately in love with her, and though she scarcely understood a word of French, she regarded him as her cavalier. In return for this attention he wrote nice little sonnets in praise of fair women, and her foolish, self-conscious airs when listening to these prompted the wicked spirits of the party to make a jest of her.

Elizabeth had several pairs of gloves of a certain make, called the Martial, after the name of the manufacturer ; so she enclosed a pair of these with four yards of the palest yellow ribbon she could find in a note to Miss Blague, which ran as follows :

“ You were the other day more charming than all the fair women in the world ; you looked yesterday still more fair than you did the day before ; if you go on, what will become of my heart ? But that has for a long time been subjugated by your pretty little *yeux marcassins*.* Shall you be at the masquerade to-morrow ? Can there be any charms at an entertainment at which you are not present ? I shall know you in whatever disguise you may be ; but I shall know my fate better by the present I send you ; you will wear knots of this ribbon in your hair, and

* *Marcassin* is French for wild boar, the eyes of which are small and lively ; therefore the phrase was akin to “ pig’s eyes,” though it meant, in addition, roguish.

these gloves will kiss the most beautiful hands in the world."

This billet was sent to Miss Blague, who was, of course, confident that it had come from none but Brisacier, and she was accordingly very happy.

The third person who was destined to suffer at the ball as the victim of a joke—though not of Miss Hamilton's making—was the Chevalier himself, who had so gratefully fallen in with the King's desire that he should be La Belle's partner that he had promised his Royal host to use all the good offices in his power with Miss Stuart to smile upon the King. He chose to represent his native country at the dance, and to this end sent his man to Paris for the most splendid suit he could procure.

Poor Lady Muskerry called upon her young cousin to gush about her delight in being invited to the ball, and to reflect upon the perfidy of man, and of her husband in particular, who, before their marriage, was ready to pass whole days and nights in seeing her dance, and now forbade her to dance at all. She grumbled at the difficulty of finding out how the Babylonian women dressed, and wondered she had not been told who was to be her partner, until the malicious girl pealed with laughter. Lady Muskerry had scarcely left when her husband entered, begging to know if there were any private ball being given on the next day, adding, "I am told my wife is making great preparations for a ball dress, and as I know she is not to be at the masquerade, I wonder where she is going. I don't mind much if it is only a private party."

Of course he got no information, and he had not

been gone long when Miss Price, a maid of honour to the Duchess and a determined rival to poor Miss Blague, entered for a gossip. She was as dark as the other girl was fair, and the sight of her at once suggested an addition to the little plot. Elizabeth gave her a pair of Martial gloves and some knots of the yellow ribbon, which delighted her, and she said she should wear both at the ball.

“Do!” replied Miss Hamilton; “but you need not say that I gave you such a trifle. And, you naughty flirt, mind you do not try to rob Miss Blague of her admirer, the Marquis, as you have already taken away her last young man. You are so lively and can speak French so well that it would be easy enough.”

The evening came, the great hall was filled with guests, and the masquers were all there but one; for a while they waited, and then in came the Chevalier de Gramont, wearing the largest and best powdered peruke imaginable, and the finest point lace, but otherwise dressed in ordinary Court clothes.

“Why, Chevalier,” called the King, “has not Termes arrived?”

“Sire, pardon me, but there is a history to my dress.”

The dancers gathered round him, all anxious to hear what it could be; and Gramont proceeded to tell them how he had waited and waited for the man who ought to have returned two days earlier; that he had only arrived an hour previously, splashed all over from head to foot, booted up to the waist, and looking as if he had been excommunicated. Termes explained that he had had the finest suit in the world made which the Duke de Guise himself had ordered,

and upon which he had employed a dozen embroiderers working night and day. He had packed it so that a deluge could not have damped it, and then, alas ! he had lost it when within half a league of Calais. He had gone down to the shore that he might take ship more quickly, and had sunk into a quicksand.

“ ‘The devil take me if they saw anything but the top of my head when they pulled me out. As for my horse, fifteen men could scarce get him out ; but the portmanteau, in which were your clothes, could never be found ; it must be at least a league underground.’

“ I should certainly have killed him, but I was afraid of keeping Miss Hamilton waiting, and I was anxious to tell your Majesty at once about the quicksand that your couriers may avoid it,” concluded the Chevalier.

Every one laughed, and began to think of dancing, but as they were forming Gramont remembered something else he had to say, and declared that his ill-humour had been increased at the door of the Palace by the devil of a phantom in masquerade who stopped him, saying that the Queen had commanded him to be her partner for the evening ; and that when he excused himself she had charged him to find out who was her partner, and send him to her immediately ; and he concluded with, “ But it is worth while to see her dress, for she must have at least sixty ells of gauze and silver tissue about her, not to mention a sort of a pyramid upon her head, adorned with a hundred thousand baubles.”

Every one wondered who it could be, excepting those who knew only too well ; the Queen looked

round and said all her dancers were present, and the King declared it must be the Duchess of Newcastle, an eccentric lady of great literary ability.

"And I," whispered Lord Muskerry to Miss Hamilton, "will bet it is another fool; for I am very much mistaken if it is not my wife."

The King wanted the lady brought in for inspection, and poor Muskerry hurriedly offered to be his ambassador, much to the relief of Elizabeth Hamilton, who was beginning to fear that her jest would land her in disgrace if the Princess of Babylon had entered in all her glory. It is needless to say that Lady Muskerry did not appear; she was hurried home by her hard-hearted husband much against her will, and a sentry placed before her chamber door to prevent her from going out again that night.

As the evening passed every one had time to wonder why Miss Blague had dressed so unbecomingly; her hair seemed stuffed with the citron-covered ribbon, she looked yellower than ever, and was constantly fluttering her gloved hands up to her head as though for a sign to some one. In her turn she wondered with a sinking heart why Miss Price wore the same adornments, and soon she became jealous, for that young lady was doing her best to fascinate the gallant Marquis, who was in no way loath to be amused. When the dances changed from the more stately ones of the Court to the quick measure of the country jig, the Duke of Buckingham, who wished to ensure the Frenchman an amusing evening, gave him a message from the King desiring him to join in the dance with Miss Blague, but he considered a country dance below his dignity and begged to be excused.

The poor girl thought he was refusing to dance with her, and her distress was complete ; and we are told that the pleasure of Miss Hamilton and her friends was at its height on seeing her discomfiture.

The Marquis never returned to his flirtation with Miss Blague, for she had inquired the meaning of *marcassin*, and being told it meant “pig’s eyes,” was furious with him. She eventually married Sir Thomas Yarborough, a man as fair as herself.

The suit of clothes that was at least a league underground, the Chevalier was destined to see just once. It was when he journeyed to the Court of France, drawn by a mistaken assurance that he would again be welcomed there. Passing through Abbeville, he stopped at the Post Hotel for food, and in the kitchen found a dozen spits laden with game before the fire. Termes was so delighted that he secretly had some shoes taken off the horses, to assure himself not only of a long rest, but of a good feed at the inn, a trick which was to bring him into disgrace. The innkeeper told them that one of the most wealthy men in the neighbourhood was going to be married that morning to one of the most beautiful girls, and begged the travellers to stay and see them. When the wedding party came from church Gramont looked with interest at the bride. Alas ! she might have been handsome, but four dozen patches scattered about her face and ten ringlets of hair on either side completely hid her from sight. The bridegroom was dressed gaudily save for his coat, which was of the greatest magnificence, and designed in the most exquisite taste. Gramont walked up to him and began to praise the embroidery, and the complimented

man explained that he had bought it for one hundred and fifty louis of a London merchant, and that he had sat up all night with him at Calais trying to beat down the price.

The Chevalier was persuaded to sit down to the feast with the bridal party, and in a little while he sent for his man. As soon as Termes entered the bridegroom rose from the table and offered his hand, saying, "Welcome, my friend; you see I have taken good care of the coat, and have kept it for a good purpose." Termes at first pretended not to know him, but had to sit down at his master's order, and later with ineffable impudence he managed to escape punishment.

After the great ball Gramont's attraction for Miss Hamilton increased until it filled his life; he talked of it openly, and was with her at every opportunity, yet every one regarded it solely as gallantry, for none thought it conceivable that such a noted lover could at last be in earnest. His friend, St. Evremond, was the only man who saw through the appearance to the reality, and took the liberty of remonstrating with him, saying that if he were in the possession of the title and estate of his family it might be excusable for him to offer himself, but as he only enjoyed a very moderate fortune he was behaving very improperly in paying his addresses to Miss Hamilton. There was the Duke of Richmond, he said, who was too mercenary to deserve her, but the King had offered to dower her, an offer which La Belle Hamilton had refused, as she had no mind for a lover who bargained as though he were buying something. And he then went through the list of rich and titled

men who were, or had been, her suitors. To all of which Gramont replied with a laugh, saying that if she had loved any of these savages, he would have had nothing to say to her, and ended with, “I shall make my peace with my King, and he will make her a lady of the Queen’s bedchamber. Toulougeon [his elder brother] will die, and Miss Hamilton will have Semeat [the Gramont country seat] with the Chevalier de Gramont,” and then he made a bet with St. Evremond of a hundred louis on the fulfilment of his prophecy.

The Count was, however, sometimes inclined to be uneasy concerning Elizabeth’s many lovers. Colonel Russell gave him perhaps the greatest anxiety, and this he showed by his somewhat malicious description of him as a man full seventy—who, to prove that he was not old, would dance until exhausted, his dancing being like his clothes, full twenty years out of fashion.

As a matter of fact, the Colonel was barely fifty, that is to say not ten years older than Gramont himself, and was in many respects a very good *parti*, though Miss Hamilton did not accept him. This gave the Chevalier much relief, which he expressed jubilantly to the King, saying that now there was only young Russell, the nephew, left, who had once been much in love with Mrs. Middleton ; but as Russell’s greatest way of showing his affection was to sacrifice a portrait of Mrs. Middleton, or some of her letters, he was in no way dangerous. “So he has really gone !” answered Charles. “Well, I will give you another piece of good news. You have lost a much more dangerous rival, that is, if he had not been married,

for my brother has lately fallen in love with Lady Chesterfield"; to which the irrepressible Chevalier responded piously, "How many blessings at once!"

Lely painted several pictures of Elizabeth Hamilton, and it is said that he himself thought the portrait here reproduced to be one of his best, having been drawn with particular pleasure. The Duke of York was also so much attracted by it that he had serious thoughts of recommencing his attentions to the original, thus giving Gramont a thrill of alarm. However, Lady Denham interfered, and the danger passed. Why the Chevalier did not make his offer and settle the matter it is difficult to say; but he had another period of anxiety when Richard Talbot (later Lord Tyrconnel) hovered around the fair beauty. There is, however, some evidence that there was an understanding between the pair before Gramont set out for that futile journey to France, on the mistaken information that his King desired his return. As soon as he arrived in Paris he was met by his brother, who told him that he must go back without appearing at Court, by the King's order. Severe as this was, it did not give great pain to the Chevalier, who had been thinking of Miss Hamilton all through his journey, and who, having obtained leave to stay a few days to collect some debts of honour, took his departure with great unconcern, arriving in London with the highest satisfaction, his reappearance giving La Belle much pleasure. When Gramont subsequently went to Bristol with the Court she "granted him the permission of writing her an account of any news that might occur upon the journey," a permission which he used to the full,

though his letters seem to have been entirely about his own concerns.

Before 1663 had run its course Gramont was really pardoned by Louis XIV, and was so delighted that he hurriedly made preparations for his departure. It is really impossible to say how far this man was sincere, or rather constant, in his love-making. It may have been that he was so overjoyed at the chance of going back to his own country under the favour of his King that he did for the time forget all about the lovely Elizabeth. In any case, so far as can be judged from the story, he made his preparations, and left London without even seeing her to say good-bye, and drove post-haste to Dover. As he was entering the town there was a clatter of horses' hoofs on the road behind him, and before he could alight horsemen appeared, one on either side of the carriage. When he was in the act of descending he found himself face to face with one of the Hamilton brothers! As he looked at his friend in momentary astonishment the voice of a second brother, George, broke the silence with :

“Chevalier de Gramont, have you forgotten nothing in London?”

Nothing could disturb the Chevalier's outward suavity. He replied with a bow :

“Pardon, monsieur, but I have forgotten to marry your sister.”

The three stayed in Dover for the night, and returned the next morning together to London, where the marriage was at once solemnized. This incident, it is said, furnished Molière with the idea of his play, *Le Mariage Forcé*.

It need scarcely be said that Gramont does not give this incident in his Memoirs. His concluding words on his love affairs are as follows :

“ The Chevalier de Gramont, as a reward of a constancy he had never before known, and which he never afterwards practised, found Hymen and Love united in his favour, and was at last blessed with the possession of Miss Hamilton.”

This important event happened in December, 1663, and in September of the following year the French ambassador announced quaintly to his King that “ a son, as beautiful as the mother and as gallant as the father, was born to Madame La Comtesse de Gramont yesterday evening.” This son must have died as an infant, for no further mention is made of him. From the *Journal de Dangeau* we learn that “ they had only two daughters, who, though ugly, were greater intriguers and better known in the fashionable world than many belles.” The elder of these daughters married Henry Howard, Earl of Stafford, and the younger went into a convent.

It was not until November, 1664, that the Count and his wife went to France, but they often came back to England. After one such visit, in 1669, King Charles sent a letter to his sister, the Duchess of Orleans, saying, “ I wrote to you yesterday by the Comte de Gramont, but I believe this letter will come sooner to your hands ; for he goes by the way of Dieppe with his wife and family ; and now that I have named her, I cannot choose but again desire you to be kind to her ; for, besides the merit her family has on both sides, she is as good a creature as ever lived. I believe she will pass for a handsome

woman in France, though she has not yet, since her lying-in, recovered that good shape she had before, and I am afraid never will."

Elizabeth, Comtesse de Gramont, was not so popular in France as she had been in England. It may be that the perplexities of life with a gay, somewhat heartless man sobered her own bright spirit, but the French ladies judged her, if we may be guided by Madame de Sévigné, as affected, by no means agreeable, and inclined to give herself haughty airs. Madame de Maintenon thought her more agreeable than amiable, and another lady has left a record that she was *Anglaise insupportable*.

Things happened as Gramont had predicted. His brother died, and he became owner of the family estates and inheritor of the family income, while his wife was made one of the French Queen's ladies.

In 1688 Gramont came as special envoy to England to congratulate James on the birth of his son, and received from that pleased monarch a gratuity of £1083 6s. 8d. To the end of his life he was frivolous and witty, living always on the surface, turning with indifference from trouble, a man who "hated sick people and loved them when they were well."

The Countess became devout, and there is on record a little incident which speaks volumes upon the differences of their characters and habits of thought. When Gramont was getting old he had a bad illness, and his wife tried to instil into his mind some idea of religion. One day she repeated the Lord's Prayer, to which he listened with great attention, saying at the end, "What is that prayer? It is very fine! Who first made it?"

The King sent the Marquis de Dangeau during this illness to see how Gramont really was, and to advise him to think of God. When the invalid heard his friend's errand he turned to his Countess with a flash of his old wit, saying, "If you don't look to it, Dangeau will juggle you out of my conversion." Later on, when he had recovered his health, it was said that he too had acquired a new devotion, concerning which St. Evremond asserted that he believed it to be sincere and honest.

The Marquis de Dangeau is less complimentary to the Count than to the Countess. He says of the one, when he was old, that "the Count's face was that of an old ape," and of the other, that she "had most lively wit and most extensive information, the greatest dignity, the utmost ease in her parties, the most refined elegance at Court. Her native haughtiness was tempered by a refined and elevated piety which had converted her into a true penitent. Her good sense was so great that she imparted it to others, and made the duties of a wife compatible with the follies and irregularities of her husband." But others give a more definite and more pleasant picture of the man. "He had laughing eyes, well-made nose, beautiful mouth, and a little dimple in his chin," says Bussy-Rabutin.

At the age of eighty Gramont dictated his Memoirs to his brother-in-law Anthony, who had been living in France since the Revolution of 1688, and it is really to Anthony Hamilton that we owe the lively and amusing account of this group of English people during the year 1663, for Gramont himself could not put two words together on paper. As with Beau Nash,

a pen was to him a torpedo, which numbed all his faculties. The censor of the Press, Fontenelle, was so shocked at the levity of these Memoirs, and so much deplored the impression they might give of the Count's character, that he refused to license the book, and Gramont indignantly appealed to the Chancellor, who decided, fortunately for us, that a man had liberty to do what he liked with his own reputation.

The Chevalier was in the habit of saying that he never intended to die, but Death, the inexorable, visited him in 1707, when he was eighty-seven, and his wife died a year later.

CHAPTER VIII

MARGARET BROOKE, LADY DENHAM

“ What frost to fruit, what arsenic to the rat,
What to fair Denham mortal chocolate.”

Andrew Marvell.

GEORGE DIGBY, second Earl of Bristol, had he been more stable, might have been a man of influence during the early part of King Charles II's reign. He had suffered much for Royalty, and at the early age of twelve had made a wonderful speech at the Bar of the House of Commons, on behalf of his father, who had been committed to the Tower by the instrumentality of the Duke of Buckingham. But he showed in all his transactions an untrustworthiness which effectually spoiled his career. During his enforced residence abroad he became a Catholic, which much alarmed Charles, who was then waiting for the call from England, so that he felt obliged to deprive him of all office. He came back to England at the Restoration and was made a Knight of the Garter, yet his religion prevented his being given any post. Of him Horace Walpole says : “ He wrote against Popery and embraced it. He was a zealous opposer of the Court and a sacrifice for it ; was conscientiously converted in the midst of his prosecution of Lord Strafford, and was most unconscientiously a prosecuter of Lord

Clarendon. With great parts, he always hurt himself and his friends. With romantic bravery, he was always an unsuccessful commander. He spoke for the Test Act, though a Roman Catholic ; and addicted himself to astrology on the birthday of true philosophy."

The only way in which we are here concerned with this unstable Earl of Bristol is in studying the mischief he did to his friends, and particularly to the two Miss Brookes, whose portraits Lely painted. He has often been described,—and in fact is so described in the catalogue of the pictures at Hampton Court,—as the uncle of those two sisters, whereas they were only distantly connected by marriage.

William Brooke, the father of the three girls, was the son of that George Brooke who was executed in 1603 for taking part in what was then known as Raleigh's conspiracy. His elder brother, Lord Cobham, was tried with him on the same charge, but was acquitted. When Lord Cobham died William Brooke, his nephew, should have succeeded to the title, but was not allowed to assume it until it might be the King's pleasure that he should do so. It never was the King's pleasure, and he died at the battle of Newbury, fighting on the Parliamentary side, in 1643.

William Brooke's wife (Penelope Hill) remained a widow for some time. Then, though she had three daughters, Hill, Frances, and Margaret, she married again, her second husband being Edward Russell, the fourth son of the then Earl of Bedford. She had seven children by him, one of whom was the young Russell who was so much in love with Mrs.



MARGARET BROOKE, LADY DENHAM

(*After Lely*)

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Middleton and who thought that the greatest proof he could give of his later love for La Belle Hamilton was the tearing up of Mrs. Middleton's letters in her honour.

Of the three daughters born to Penelope and to William Brooke, the eldest, named after her, Hill, married Sir William Boothby in 1656; the second girl, Frances, and the third, Margaret, both of them very attractive, must have been twenty or more when they were discovered by Lord Bristol to be of possible use to himself. They were both possessed of some fortune and were co-heirs of the forfeited barony of Cobham and of the baronies of Braye and Borough. Edward Russell, the stepfather of Frances and Margaret, was brother to Lady Bristol, and therefore the relationship between them and Lord Bristol was no nearer than that they were the stepdaughters of his brother-in-law.

The youngest girl, Margaret, is often miscalled Elizabeth, and is also described as the eldest daughter and not the third, while their respective ages are given as sixteen and seventeen. These inaccuracies are not of much importance to-day, but they are not the less inaccuracies. Lady Elizabeth Brooke, who died in 1683, being noted for her elegance and her piety, was a daughter of Thomas Colepepper, and was painted not by Lely, but by Parkhurst. Gramont says of the two sisters that they were both formed by nature to excite love in others, as well as to be susceptible of it themselves; "they were just what the King wanted."

When Digby, Earl of Bristol, saw these two girls he was without any post either under the Crown or

the Government, and he was hoping, despite his profession of Catholicism, to have office conferred on him. He was very friendly with Charles, and always used his influence as much as possible against Chancellor Clarendon's prudent advice — pandering to Charles's love of pleasure and hoping by amusing him in the evening to gain honour from him in the morning.

The pretty, light-hearted sisters, bred for society, with no other aim than to attract and to be attracted, set his thoughts working, with the result that he became particularly polite to their mother, Lady Russell, and offered any assistance he could give towards settling her daughters in life. One step towards that end was to invite them to his supper parties and entertainments, at which luxury and elegance seemed to rival each other. To these parties he also invited the King and did his best to promote friendly feelings between His Majesty and the two girls. Frankly he hoped that Charles would fall in love with one or both, for he was quite prepared to sacrifice his two "relations" if only he could gain something for himself by so doing. The King was quite sensible of this kind attention, and divided his favours between Frances and Margaret, at first scarcely troubling to make any choice at all. Things would most probably have gone just as the Earl wished had it not been for Lady Castlemaine, who found out in some way what was happening, and as she was devoting herself at that time entirely to the King, had no desire to share his attentions with any one. It is impossible to say who told her of what went on at these parties, but my lady thought it time that she too received invita-

tions to them. This, of course, the Earl could not refuse, so Charles—it was during the somewhat diffident stage of his love for Castlemaine, when they quarrelled and made it up like children—had to show a certain amount of propriety, and Margaret Brooke, who had been boldest in her assaults on the King's heart, felt so cowed by the overbearing arrogance of the favourite that she did not even dream of contesting the advantage she had gained. As for the King, we are told that he did not dare to think any more about the girl.

Among those who had watched the little comedy was the Duke of York, who had quite as catholic a taste in love as his brother ; and he thought Margaret pretty enough to be worthy of his attentions. We can say nothing of hearts caught in the rebound in this case, but Miss Brooke did not hesitate to accept consolation at the hands of the second gentleman in the kingdom. However, once more there were those outside her little social circle to step in and try to save her in spite of herself. It may be that her stepfather—for her mother died in 1661—began to realize the importance of events, and preferred to see the girl towards whom he felt responsibility an honest wife rather than a shameless hanger-on of the Court ; certain it is that as soon as a suitor for Margaret's hand opportunely appeared in the person of Sir John Denham, she was quickly and safely married. Six days before the ceremony Charles, by a Royal warrant, conferred upon the bride, in common with her two sisters of the whole blood, the precedence of a baron's daughter.

The bridegroom bore a name well known in English

literature as that of a poet, satirist, and wit. Denham had been a gambler from his youth, and when he was about twenty-six this vice landed him in family trouble, so to prove to his father that he was an innocently accused young man he wrote an essay against gaming, entitled "The Anatomy of Play, Written by a Worthy and Learned Gent. Dedicated to his Father to show his detestation of it." Whether his father—whose very caps, wrought, it is true, with gold, went to find money for his son's gaming—was hoodwinked by the pamphlet, no record tells. John Denham married in 1631, and a few years later inherited his father's property. He wrote a tragedy named *The Sophy*, which was acted successfully and which made Waller say of him, "He broke out like the Irish rebellion, three-score thousand strong, when nobody was aware, or in the least suspected it." His reputation, however, rests chiefly upon his poem of "Cooper's Hill," a description of the scenery about Egham, and that is mainly remembered for its brief passage about the Thames, "strong without rage, without o'erflowing full." During the many troubles of the Civil War George Wither, another poet, applied to Cromwell for a grant of Denham's property, and in consequence held his house at Egham. Sir John retaliated for this later when, Wither being taken prisoner by the Royalists, he begged Charles I to pardon him on the ground that while Wither lived he would not himself be the worst poet in England.

By means of ciphers Denham managed Charles I's correspondence, but when in 1648 he became suspected he took a share in the escape of James, Duke

of York, from England, and went with him to Holland. He was from first to last a Royalist, and at the Restoration was granted land and leases in exchange for those he had lost ; he was also made surveyor-general of His Majesty's works, in which capacity he is said to have built Burlington House. He arranged Charles II's coronation, was made a Knight of the Bath, and was constantly in touch with the Court. Thus it was that, having been a widower some time, he became attracted by Margaret Brooke and asked her hand in marriage.

Gramont, who, as has already been said, allowed no story to fail of being effective for want of exaggeration, says that at his marriage with a girl of eighteen he was seventy-nine ("ancient and limping," according to Aubrey) ; but this was pure invention. In May, 1665, the year of his marriage, he had reached his fiftieth birthday, though there is reason to believe that from ill-health he looked much older, while instead of being eighteen, his bride was twenty-three. Margaret Brooke might have refused to be thus autocratically settled, but that the Duke of York had cooled in his love-making and had neglected her for some time. Therefore she determined to take the man who wanted her and make the best of it, with her town house in Scotland Yard and a country estate at Waltham Cross.

As soon as James knew that another man desired the fair damsel she went up considerably in his estimation, and he pursued her everywhere ; but Margaret shook her head and kept him at a distance, though, as she longed above all things to be a Court lady, she made him promises of future favours upon the fulfil-

ment of certain conditions. Sir John Denham had no idea that a conspiracy of this sort attended his marriage ; he was very much in love, and probably hoped to have years of happiness with his young wife.

For a time it seemed as though he would have his desire, for Lady Chesterfield, who was intent on revenging herself for her husband's neglect, was tempted to rob the young bride of the Royal lover she coveted. She made a dead set at James, a Prince who had never been able to resist a woman's eyes. She ogled him and he ogled her in return, "and as he was the most unguarded ogler of his time, the whole Court was informed of the intrigue before it was well begun." This little affair gave Sir John at least a few months' happiness with his wife, though she was scarcely pleased with the turn things had taken, all of which sounds very sordid in an age when the whole standard of life and decency has been raised.

Yet this had a reverse side, which no one has put before us so successfully as Gramont ; though behind all his graceful words one sees lurking the dark shadow of licentiousness and want of principle. He tells us that at the time of Lady Chesterfield's infatuation for James "the Court was an entire scene of gallantry and amusements, with all the politeness and magnificence which the inclinations of a prince, naturally addicted to tenderness and pleasure, could suggest ; the beautiful were desirous of charming, and the men endeavoured to please ; all studied to set themselves off to the best advantage ; some distinguished themselves by dancing ; others by show and magnificence ; some by their wit, many by their amours, but few by their constancy."

One might almost have thought that Margaret Denham would have been discouraged by the many obstacles which seemed to come in the way of the fulfilment of her desire for Royal favour ; but being a woman without principle she waited her time, and at last, after Lady Chesterfield had finally been carried off to the country by her jealous husband, she saw her goal in sight. She had made herself conspicuous by her bitter anger against her rival ; now she was as conspicuous by the adulation she offered to the Duke. A year after her marriage she was publicly regarded as James's mistress, Pepys telling us in June, 1666, how “ the Duke of York is wholly given up to his new mistress, my Lady Denham, going at noonday with all his gentlemen to visit her in Scotland Yard ; she declaring that she will not be his mistress, as Mrs. Price, to go up and down the Privy-stairs, but will be owned publicly ; and so she is. Mr. Brouncker, it seems, was the person to bring it about, and my Lady Castlemaine, who designs thereby to fortify herself with the Duke, as she has quarrelled with the King.” Wheels within wheels, Castlemaine's temper caused her to need an ally in the King's brother, so she gains his favour by satisfying Lady Denham's desire ! One could wish that Brouncker, who had sufficient intellect to be one of the most famous chess players of his time, had not been engaged in the dishonourable work with which he occasionally served the Duke.

Once having actually started the game, the Duke was no laggard : he pursued his courtship as openly as the lady could desire ; at assemblies he would take her aside and talk to her alone in the sight of all the

world. Says Pepys : “ Good Mr. Evelyn cries out against it and calls it bickering ; for the Duke of York talks a little to her, and then she goes away, and then he follows her again like a dog.” This was in the midst of the Great Fire, and it might have been thought that even a Royal Duke could have found something better to do in such a terrible emergency. But the evils of the Court appear to have afflicted every one with a wonderful callousness. The nobility held aloof in the country, offering no help, either to comfort the King or to put heart into the people, or to guard against robberies and commotions. No priest went to the King or Court to give good counsel, or to comfort the suffering poor. “ All is dead, nothing of good in any of their minds.” Thus said Evelyn in a desponding mood, and we are glad to know that Charles was better than his people at this crisis, that he stayed in London, went to the burning districts, personally conducted rescues and escapes, advised about blowing up houses, and is said by his foresight to have saved the Tower from destruction.

Lady Denham naturally wished to do what she could for the man who had first introduced her to Court ; and so she became a great advocate of Lord Bristol’s schemes, which very much annoyed the Duke, for he had no belief in mixing love and business. Thus it became whispered abroad that he was less in her company, and that she was much upset by it.

As for Sir John Denham, he went through every phase of jealousy. He knew that he was laughed at, not only by his friends, but by the public generally,

as an old man who was obliged to be complaisant about the sins of his pretty young wife, and unlike Lord Chesterfield, he could think of no way of stopping the intrigue. He brooded and grew strange in his manner, and at last determined to take a journey to see some freestone quarries at Portland, in Dorset. History records that the first proof of his madness was that he posted to within a mile of the place, and then would go no farther, but drove back to London without seeing the quarries. It may have been that the long solitary journey had allowed his brain to run riot over his dishonour, and the object of his travels became of no account. On returning to London he went to Hounslow, and demanded rents of lands that he had sold many years before ; and when he saw the King told him that he was the Holy Ghost. Aubrey states that this interval of madness was caused by his wife's conduct, but there are clumsy lines in Andrew Marvell's satire on the palace which Clarendon was building which hint that his illness was due to a blow from a brickbat.

“Thus daily his gouty inventions him pained,
And all for to save the expenses of brickbat ;
That engine so fatal which Denham had brained,
And too much resembled his wife's chocolat.”

Whatever the cause, the madness did not last long ; then, while he was convalescent, his wife fell ill.

Lady Denham had clung pertinaciously to her desire to be given a post in the Duchess's household, and when a place as Lady of the Bedchamber fell vacant she demanded it. The Duke promised that she should have it, and insisted upon this with Anne. She naturally refused to agree to the arrangement ; it was bad

enough to have rivals outside her home, or to have more or less insignificant rivals inside, but to admit into her household in a familiar capacity a beautiful, pushing young woman who had shown so strong a determination to secure the Duke's affections was too much for her patience ; she absolutely refused to be a party to such a plan. At this critical time in the quarrel Lady Denham was seized with a violent and painful illness, so that every one believed she was at the point of death. In the midst of her pain she cried out that she had been poisoned, and every one repeated this idea. However, a few days later, that is to say on November 12th, 1666, she was recovering, though she still maintained, even telling the Duke of York so, that she had been poisoned.

Margaret Denham lived for two months after being taken ill, dying on January 6th, 1666-7. The idea of poison, which seems to have died down, was revived, and great excitement prevailed. John Aubrey plainly says that the poison was administered in a cup of chocolate by the Countess of Rochester. Gramont is just as exact in fastening the guilt of her death upon her husband.

As has been said, Gramont could never bring himself to spoil a story for the sake of mere exactitude, and if there were two opinions about a case he would always adopt the more dramatic ; therefore his assertion of Denham's wickedness is no reason for our believing it. His description, however, is picturesque enough to be given in his own words :

“ His wife was young and handsome, he old and disagreeable : what reason, then, had he to flatter him-

self that Heaven would exempt him from the fate of husbands in the like circumstances ? This he was continually saying to himself ; but, when compliments were poured in upon him from all sides, upon the place his lady was going to have near the duchess's person, he formed ideas of what was sufficient to have made him hang himself, if he had possessed the resolution. The traitor chose rather to exercise his courage against another. He wanted precedents for putting in practice his resentments in a privileged country ; that of Lord Chesterfield was not sufficiently bitter for the revenge he meditated : besides, he had no country house to which he could carry his unfortunate wife. This being the case, the old villain made her travel a much longer journey without stirring out of London. Merciless fate robbed her of life, and of her dearest hopes, in the bloom of youth."

Whether there was or was not truth in the belief that poison was given there was a wave of public indignation concerning Lady Denham's death ; some regarding her husband as the murderer, and some boldly stating that Anne of York had inspired the deed. Lampoons were written, and shouted in the streets ; a libel accusing Anne was affixed to her palace door. Two days after Lady Denham's death Lord Conway wrote that she was "poisoned, as she said herself, in a cup of chocolate. The Duke of York was very sad, and kept his chambers when I went to visit him." *A Key to Count Gramont's Memoirs*, published a year later than the book itself, gives the information that "the Duchess of York was strongly suspected of having poisoned her with powder of

diamonds." Crowds gathered round Sir John's house, and Gramont asserts that their purpose was to tear him to pieces as soon as he came abroad. But he shut himself up to bewail his wife's death, and appeased the people by giving her a magnificent funeral in the chancel of St. Margaret's at Westminster, and by distributing four times more burnt wine than had ever been drunk at any funeral in England before. The Duke further declared that never again would he own a mistress publicly, upon which Pepys comments, "which I shall be glad of, and would the King would do the like."

That many people thoroughly believed Lady Denham to have been poisoned is shown by the references in contemporary literature. One writer, Henry Newcome, says that a little later the Duchess of York was "troubled with the apparition of the Lady Denham, and through anxiety bit off a piece of her tongue"; and Marvell refers to the subject more than once.

"Express her [Anne] studying now, if China clay
Can, without breaking, venom'd juice convey :
Or how a mortal poison she may draw
Out of the cordial meal of the cocoa."

Again, he speaks of her trying forbidden arts when she finds "herself scorned for emulous Denham's face." Also, when her baby son, the Duke of Kendal, died, at a time when his brother was mortally ill, he published the epigram :

"Kendal is dead, and Cambridge riding post,
What fitter sacrifice for Denham's ghost?"

The Duchess must have suffered considerably at

being so lightly accused, but accusations fell more easily then than they do now, for there was no law of libel, and speech was as much plainer as dress was more magnificent. When all had been said and written, there was no proof that Lady Denham had not died from natural causes, the autopsy held by her own instructions betraying no trace of poison. The Earl of Ossory wrote on January 25th to the Duke of Ormond : “ My Lady Denham’s body at her own desire was opened, but no sign of poison found.” There seems to have been only her own excited imagination to give utterance and lend weight to the suspicion.

Sir John Denham died a little more than two years after his wife, in March, 1669, at the age of fifty-three. His intellect was still keen and he wrote an elegy upon Cowley’s death, which showed no sign of failing powers ; he had also a sufficiently large fortune to live at ease, but he was not a favourite at Court, for there was an idea that he was still mad, and the poor man was reduced to feeling gratitude towards any one who would talk with him. His burial-place was in Westminster Abbey, near the monument of Geoffrey Chaucer. Aubrey gives a quaint description of his appearance during the last part of his life. He was tall, round-shouldered, and delicate ; his hair was thin, flaxen and having a moist curl ; his eye was of a kind of light goose-grey, not big, but possessed of a strange piercingness, as though he could see into your very thoughts. Serious as he was in character he had been even more rollicking than most men in his youth, for there is on record one occasion on which, after staying too late at a tavern, he secured a plasterer’s

brush and a large pot of ink, with which as he went down the Strand, from Temple Bar to Charing Cross, he blotted out all the signs. He was discovered as the author of this joke, fined, and solemnly warned as to his future behaviour.

CHAPTER IX

FRANCES BROOKE, LADY WHITMORE

“The Cause of love can never be assigned,
‘Tis in no face, but in the lover’s mind.”—*Dryden.*

IT may well cause wonder how it was that of two girls brought up in exactly similar circumstances one was so thoroughly bent on a life of pleasure, while the other seems to have renounced it, excepting in its most innocent form, after the first introduction. Was it only temperament, or was it that the younger of the two was so much more fascinating than the other? Judging from her portrait, Frances Brooke must have been a woman of somewhat determined character and marked individuality, and she probably had quite enough sense to know on which side of life lay the best things. She must have been nearly twenty-five when she married a man whose name is scarcely met with in the chronicles of Court circles, though he was made a Knight of the Bath at the Coronation of Charles II. This was Sir Thomas Whitmore, of Bridgnorth, second son of Sir Thomas Whitmore, Bart., of Apley Park, in Shropshire. Of this marriage there were three daughters born, the second of whom, Frances, was one of Kneller’s Beauties, and will be met with in later pages. Sir Thomas Whitmore died in 1682, being buried in St. Paul’s Cathedral. Of the

marriage we have just these bare facts and nothing more.

And really nothing more substantial can be said of Frances Brooke's second marriage, excepting that though both bride and groom were middle-aged there seems to have been a deep love between them. The second husband was Mathew Harvey, of Twickenham, who was probably even more of a stranger to Court life than was Sir Thomas Whitmore. He was possessed of no title, though he had both a brother and a cousin who had received the honour of knighthood ; but there was fame of a far higher kind in his family, for he was the nephew of the great Harvey who discovered the secret of the circulation of the blood.

That Mathew Harvey and his wife passed a few years together in a happy domestic fashion can scarcely be doubted, and then Frances died at the age of about fifty, being buried in Twickenham Church on May 15th, 1690, her body lying close beneath the pew in which she and her husband had so often sat side by side. A monument, in the form of an urn made of veined marble standing upon a pedestal, was raised to her memory. On each side of the pedestal were carved the arms of Harvey and Brooke, and on the front of it was an epitaph written by Dryden, who was moved either by his friendship for Harvey or his admiration for Frances, and in which he bore witness—as all such epitaphs do—to her virtues, though in a simple, dignified way which is not frequent on the tombstones of the period.

“ Fair, kind and true, a treasure each alone,
A wife, a mistress and a friend in one,
Rest in this tomb, rais'd at thy husband's cost,
Here sadly summing what he had and lost.



FRANCES BROOKE, LADY WHITMORE

(*After Lely*)

[TO FACE PAGE 168]

Come, Virgins, ere in equal bands ye join,
Come first, and offer at her sacred shrine ;
Pray but for half the virtues of this wife,
Compound for all the rest, with longer life ;
And wish your vows, like hers, may be return'd,
So lov'd when living, and when dead so mourn'd."

There is neither date nor name to this part of the monument ; as though the bereaved man thought it needless for his own sake to mark his wife's tomb more particularly, for he could never forget where she lay. On his death, in 1693, an inscription recording the event was chiselled on the back and right side of the pedestal.

In his will Mr. Harvey desired to be buried under his pew, close to his wife's grave and coffin, his head to her feet, the cost not to be more than £150. He left £100 to the poor in Twickenham on condition that the parish kept in repair the monument he had erected to his wife. It is said that the devotion of his housekeeper to Lady Whitmore in her last illness was partly responsible for the fact that he left his estates to that sympathetic woman, and it is not unlikely that the fact that he had no children made it easy for him to do this. Since those far-away days the monument has been moved from its old place in the body of the church and placed at the head of one of the stairs to the gallery.

As far as can be judged—for in these memoirs there is no saying what exciting episodes took place in those years of which there is no record—the lives of the two sisters touched the extremes in human fate. The one unprincipled, light in love, seeking shame publicly, her name both in life and in death on the lips of all ; the other unknown except by a few, and

unsung except by the best poet of the day, who, though he had stigmatized the vices of his age in many a drama, could only speak of her in loving honour.

There has been a curious divergence of opinion concerning the portrait of Lady Whitmore, the original of which is in Hampton Court. Mrs. Jameson wrote in her book of biographies : "When the accompanying portrait was first copied and engraved for publication, it was supposed to represent Frances Brooke, Lady Whitmore, the younger [should be elder] sister of Lady Denham ; by which name the portrait has been traditionally known in the gallery at Windsor. But on examining the duplicate at Narford, in the possession of Mr. Fountaine, and referring to the authority of Horace Walpole and Granger, there can be little doubt that it represents a woman much more notorious, Anne, Countess of Southesk. By this title the picture has always been distinguished at Narford since the days of Sir Andrew Fountaine, the first possessor and the contemporary of the original, and by this name it was recognized as the original by Horace Walpole. The copy made in crayons by his order is now at Strawberry Hill, and noted in his catalogue as that of Lady Southesk."

No one seems to have troubled to prove or controvert this decision ; the picture at Hampton Court is still labelled Frances Brooke, but the engraving of it at the British Museum is labelled Anne, Lady Southesk. As a matter of fact, Mrs. Jameson did not go quite far enough. She may have superficially examined the picture at Narford, but she could not have compared the two canvases. Had she done so

she would have discovered that either the copyist was a practical joker or that he had definite instructions to do what he did. He represented the whole picture with only some slight inaccuracies about small details ; the figure, the pose, the clothing are all the same, but the face in one is that of Frances Brooke, while the face in the picture at Narford is that of Lady Southesk. Miss Brooke possessed heavily marked features, thick eyebrows, a long, rather ugly nose, well-formed but large mouth, and dark hair. The picture at Narford is of a woman with pretty, straight features, pencilled eyebrows, a straight nose, a mouth small enough to fit an infant of two years, and taking it altogether a baby face imbued with an expression of obstinacy which we see oftenest in childhood.

Lady Southesk—the Anne Hamilton so friendly in her youth with Barbara Palmer—had a particularly unsavoury reputation, and by proving that the portraits are really different, we have at least saved this volume from including a description of another sordid, dull career of flippancy and vice.

CHAPTER X

SUSAN ARMINE, LADY BELASYSE

“ Each fool, to low ambition, poorly great,
That pines in splendid wretchedness of state,
Tir’d in the treach’rous chase, would nobly yield,
And, but for shame, like Sylla, quit the field :
The demon shame paints strong the ridicule,
And whispers close, ‘*The world shall call you fool.*’ ”

Pope.

OF Lady Belasyse, as of various other of these picture-gallery heroines, history has only recorded a few incidents in which she had a share. Her father was Sir William Armine, Bart., who sat in the Long Parliament as member for Cumberland ; her mother was Lady Anne Poulet, daughter of the Marquis of Winchester. Sir William Armine died in 1658, leaving two daughters, Anne and Susan ; and his widow, a few years later, married John, Baron Belasyse.

While the family of Belasyse was flourishing their name was spelled in at least half a dozen different ways—Bellassis, Bellasys, Bellowsesse, Belasyse, being a few,—the most correct of which seems to be that of Belasyse, which has been adopted here.

The two Armine girls were left, on the death of their father, each with an income of £1000 a year, which certainly added to their attractions. They were not good-looking, but what was lost in classical feature was gained in buoyancy and vivacity of expression.



SUSAN ARMINE, LADY BELASYSE, AS ST. CATHERINE

(*After Lely*)

[TO FACE PAGE 172]

When Lord Belasyse married Lady Armine he already had a son, Henry, who had just become a widower, not that he was anything but a young man, for his marriage had been contracted in boyhood. The idea of Henry Belasyse marrying his stepmother's daughter Susan did not arise for some time ; when it did it had its birth in expediency. The young man was a wild, quarrelsome, swashbuckling fellow, whose qualities may have been those to attract a very young girl, who often thinks bravery the beginning and ending of worth if she is considering her future husband. Henry was well liked by Sir John Reresby, and probably possessed that generosity of temperament which often goes with recklessness ; if so, he did not display such a noble quality when making his second marriage.

His extravagance in every way landed him in serious difficulties, and when he applied to his father for help he received advice rather than assistance, and as usual the advice was unwelcome. “The only thing for you to do, my son, is to marry an heiress.”

An heiress ! What heiress should he marry ? There was only one woman in the world for him, and that was Gertrude Pierrepont. He would marry her and no one else ! And she was not an heiress. However, when Gertrude shook her head at him, when his creditors sought him with unfailing regularity, and his father only repeated his advice with added details, Henry began to think better of it. He looked at Susan with an appraising eye : she was irregular in feature, had an ugly mouth, and was not fair,—but she had an income equal to £5000 of the present-day money !

Lord and Lady Belasyse arranged the whole affair.

It is not easy to say how old Susan was, but she could scarcely have been over twenty, if she was not some years younger than that. She must have been young, for she seems to have had no voice in the matter when, in 1664, she was married to a man who told every one quite plainly that though he married Susan he would never desist from his pursuit of Gertrude, whom he would not give up as long as he lived. The foolish part of this was that Gertrude did not care a fig for him. She not only did not respond to his advances, but showed an entire indifference to his wooing. It may have been that very indifference that kept Belasyse chained to her ; he went where she went, contrived to see her in and out of season, and swore that though he could not marry her no one else should. And she, like the good girl that she was, “gave him no encouragement in the least, but was exactly virtuous, which made this humour of his the more extravagant.” Thus wrote his close friend and constant companion Sir John Reresby.

Poor Susan’s married life must have been anything but pleasant, though there was probably something exciting in it, as her husband’s name is only mentioned in the chronicles of the times as either killing some one or trying to get killed. Nothing gave him such joy as a duel.

Soon after his marriage a rumour went the round of aristocratic circles that William Russell, second son of the Earl of Bedford (who later married Rachel Wriothesley, and was so foully murdered by the malice of Charles and the brutal insistence of his tool Jeffries), was desiring to marry Gertrude Pierrepont. This rumour aroused all the truculence of that very trucu-

lent young man Henry Belasyse, and he promptly invented a story that William Russell had said insulting things of him and his friends. Having made this up to his satisfaction, he at once went into a great rage over it, and sent his friend John Reresby with a challenge to the innocent suitor. Russell was thunderstruck at the accusation and seemed to lose sight of the challenge and possible fight in his concern at the idea that Belasyse could even think that he had depreciated him, and he naturally protested that he had never in his life spoken ill of Sir Henry or any of his friends. Reresby knew that what he said was true and went back to argue the jealous man into some sense if possible. Fortunately Henry allowed himself to be persuaded, not so much because of Reresby's eloquence as because he had heard that the rumour was untrue. In spite of his bellicose actions and fiery protestations he never gained the approval of Miss Pierrepont, who, though not until after his death, married the Marquis of Halifax.

Years later, indeed in 1680, Lady Russell refers to this threatened duel when she includes in a note to her husband the information that a friend tells her that Lady Halifax (Gertrude Pierrepont) has lost no beauty in the country, and she (the friend) wishes particularly that he should know it.

Henry Belasyse had been made a Knight of the Bath at the Restoration, and had at once joined a band of young men whose names were soon known all over London for their unrestrained wildness. One of the worst acts of his life took place at the beginning of 1662, when he went with a party thief-hunting to the district around Waltham Cross. His companions

were Charles, Lord Buckhurst (afterwards Lord Dorset), and his brother, Edward Sackville ; his own cousin, John Belasyse, and Thomas Wentworth. To try to defeat the aims of footpads and highwaymen was well enough, but to do it in a reckless, adventurous fashion, intent upon capturing some one whatever happened, was a dangerous experiment. They succeeded in catching and killing an innocent tanner named Hoppy, whose pockets they thoughtfully rifled. When they were soon after apprehended they seemed surprised that they should be regarded as guilty of anything but a regrettable mistake. They had taken the man for a robber, and regarded the money in his pocket as stolen property ; no one could call such an act on their part either robbery or murder ! The grand jury at the trial found a bill for manslaughter only, and so far as the evidence goes the guilty ones were acquitted on their excuse.

We find Sir Henry in connection with another duel making mischief when drunk, repeating a matter told him in confidence about the Duke of Buckingham by John Reresby, which caused “the Duke to frown upon” the latter. Whereupon Reresby went to Belasyse, who owned to saying something about the matter when in his cups, and offered to deny stoutly that he had heard the gossip from his friend, fixing it upon another man who had also repeated the story and could not be troubled by the Duke’s anger. Upon which Reresby answered with the veiled threat that it became him so ill, being the Duke’s officer, to appear to reflect on his captain, that if the gossip was laid to his charge it must cause a quarrel, and “Sir Henry Belasyse was the last man I desired to

have a difference with." Sir Henry perjured his soul bravely, and smoothed matters, though the Duke still suspected his inferior officer. Shortly after this the Duke was in disgrace with his King, and Belasyse took him home and hid him in his own house, running great hazard for him in this event. Buckingham could scarcely have been a good companion for a young wife, though he could sometimes ape a virtue he did not feel.

There was at least one more duel which Belasyse had to fight, for he was evidently determined to die by the sword, and was indifferent as to whether it was the sword of a friend or a foe. On July 28th, 1667, he and his fast friend Tom Porter dined with Sir Robert Carr, drinking just enough to make him talk nonsense and think himself a very fine fellow. His friend Tom was in the same condition, and the two argued together in such loud voices that the other guests turned to look at them with questioning wonder. "Are they quarrelling?" said some one aloud.

"Quarrelling?" shouted Henry. "I would have you know that I *never* quarrel. I strike! And you may take that as a rule of mine."

"How! Strike!" replied Tom Porter. "I should like to see the man in England who would dare to strike me!"

He had not to wait for the fulfilment of his wish. His dear friend at once gave him a sounding box on the ear, and out flashed Porter's sword. But restraining hands pulled the two silly men apart, and after struggling and talking Porter went away. In the street he met Dryden the poet, and told him, excitedly, all that had happened, saying that he was

resolved to fight Belasyse at once, for if he waited until the next day they could not help but patch up the quarrel, and then the blow would rest upon him. So he begged Dryden to lend him the boy who was with him to stand at Sir Robert Carr's door to watch which way Belasyse went, and then run to tell him. He himself went to waste the time at a coffee-house, and presently ran the boy, saying that the baronet's coach was coming. Porter walked out of the coffee-house and stopped the coach, ordering his friend to come out of it.

"Why?" said Sir Henry. "You will not strike as I come out, will you?"

"No," replied Porter grimly.

So Belasyse stepped into the road and flung away the scabbard of his sword.

"Are you ready?" cried Porter. And then they started fighting, surrounded by friends who had been lounging in the coffee-house. In a few minutes they were both wounded, and Belasyse was so badly hurt that he called Tom to him, while dropping his sword. Supporting himself by his friend's shoulder, he kissed him, saying :

"Go, Tom, save yourself, for you have hurt me to death; but I will make shift to stand upon my legs until you are safely away, then no one will stop you; and I would not have you get into trouble for what you have done."

Tom told Belasyse that he too was wounded and could not go far. So both men were taken to their homes in very bad case. Tom Porter recovered and fled, but Belasyse lingered for nine days before he died. Of the event Pepys says : "It is pretty to see

how the world talks of them as a couple of fools that killed one another out of love." Reresby, who truly mourned his friend, notes bitterly that Buckingham (again in Royal favour) neither went to Belasyse in his illness nor sent to inquire of him, though he owed him much, and all for some slight unwarranted jealousy which he felt about the Countess of Shrewsbury.

Susan, who had by this time developed into a woman of noble proportions, was now, in the flush of young womanhood, a widow with one son, and after her mourning was over she became a well-known figure at Court.

Burnet and Granger both emphasize the fact that she was not beautiful; "she was one of the least handsome women who appeared at Court," but she "was remarkable for a vivacity which seems to have supplied the place, and answered all the purposes of beauty." The Duke of York, who was won far more quickly by wit than by prettiness, was soon attracted by her, and hovered in her vicinity, that he could enjoy her bright repartees. When his Duchess died, in 1671, he found consolation in Susan's society, and gradually began to rely upon her judgment and sympathy. Thus when the first rumour arose that the new Duchess would be a Princess of Modena a contemporary wrote: "Though the women will not believe but that my Lady Belasyse shall be the person, His Royal Highness, wheresoever he meets her, entertaining her with a particular esteem."

As a mere matter of business it was recognized by all that James must take a second wife, and while his brother and his ministers were searching Europe for a bride he was making ardent love to Susan Belasyse.

She may have withheld him at first, but in the end she capitulated, though not until, having taken a hint from the Duke's previous history, she had secured from him a written promise of marriage. The one thing which stood between them personally was the fact that Lady Belasyse was a thoughtful Protestant, while James was certain that Roman Catholicism was the only true faith. He did his utmost to convert her, and she retaliated with such good result that papists took alarm. Her late husband's family were all Catholics, and Lord Belasyse learned of the serious nature of the Duke's infatuation through some words used by Susan. He was greatly perturbed and determined to upset the scheme. The Duke of York had been going to Susan's house over-often in the warmth of his love—that love which had been réchaufféed so many times that surely all flavour had gone from it!—so the lady's relatives and friends took it upon themselves to talk seriously to her. When the advice became reproach, and then dictation, Susan lost her temper and her discretion, and replied angrily that if the Duke did come often to her house she could prove that his intentions were honourable.

If she had been a weaker person her boast might have been passed over with indifference, but she had a reputation for being determined, “intractable” Bishop Burnet called it; so her worthy and zealous father-in-law felt that if she gained a dominant influence over the future King of England, it would be all over with papacy. In his alarm he went to Charles and laid the whole affair before him, making zeal for the King and for the honour of the Duke his excuse.

Charles determined to nip that romance, if not in

the bud, certainly before it came to its full growth, so he sent for his brother and first had a long talk with him and then laid upon him his commands. “It was too much,” he said, “that James had played the fool once ; he was not to be allowed to do it a second time, and at his age !”

Feeling assured of his brother’s obedience he next attacked the lady. Here he met with a greater resistance, for Susan flatly refused to give up the written document she had obtained from James ; though how any woman could wish to marry a man with such a reputation as he had acquired it is difficult to understand. For the sake of a few baubles, for a few years of sham magnificence, to accept such a terrible life as had been led by Anne, inwardly beset with fears and dismay, with diseased children dying almost as soon as born, and if they lived a year or two passing their baby days in pain and suffering—to risk all this in exchange for a wholesome existence in wealth and comfort shows, if not the depravity of the individual, at least the horror of the social system which could make it possible that any woman should contemplate, let alone intrigue for it.

Susan clung to her bond, and the King was determined to have it ; so that at last it came, not to commands, but to threats, and to save herself from the results of the King’s anger, which at their worst would have been mercy compared with the position of Duchess of York, Lady Belasyse made a compromise for the sake of her honour. She would give up the bond itself, on condition that she was allowed to keep an attested copy of it. After some hesitation this was granted, and the Duke was free to seek as a wife a

young girl whom he jocularly described as a play-fellow for his twelve-year-old daughter. Charles was pleased to show his approbation of Susan's sacrifice by making her, in 1674, a peeress, with the title of Baroness Belasyse of Osgodby, as she had succeeded to half her father's estates.

Susan showed her good sense by accepting her defeat in a philosophic spirit and becoming one of the young Duchess's ladies. Later she was present at the birth of that son about whose parentage there were so many divergent and violent opinions.

It is said by Mrs. Jameson that Susan married in 1683 a man named Fortrey, who predeceased her, but we find no mention of him elsewhere. Henry Belasyse, her son, who succeeded to his father's title, died in 1690, leaving a widow who afterwards married the Duke of Richmond, son to Louise de Kéroualle. As to Susan's death, Swift wrote to Stella, under date of March, 1712: "You know old Lady Belasyse is dead at last? She has left Lord Berkeley of Stratton one of her executors, and it will be of great advantage to him, they say about £10,000."

CHAPTER XI

ELIZABETH WRIOTHEESLEY, COUNTESS OF NORTHUMBERLAND

“Mira can lay her beauty by,
Take no advantage of the eye ;
Quit all that Lely’s art can take,
And yet a thousand captives make.”

Edmund Waller.

THOMAS WRIOTHEESLEY, the fourth Earl of Southampton, “that right noble and virtuous peer whose loyalty was not more exemplary than his love to his country,” had two daughters by his first marriage, and four by his second. His second daughter was Rachel, Lady Russell, wife of that Earl so recklessly put to death—murdered, William III’s Parliament named it—by Charles II. The only girl who survived of the four younger daughters was Elizabeth, the subject of this sketch.

The first notable event in those days in a girl’s life was her marriage; until that occurred she was not heard of, and her education seems to have been generally of a negative kind. To talk French was the one necessary accomplishment, but even that many of them could not do. Had the intelligence of the women of the Stuart period been trained in their childhood, there would have been fewer immoral

and unmoral women. But the poor girl-child was not many years in the world before her parents began to seek a husband for her, that they might settle her in some one else's hands. Thus the Earl of Southampton contracted his daughter Audrey in marriage to Joscelyn, Lord Percy, the son of the tenth Earl of Northumberland. But before the marriage took place the child died while she was thirteen, causing the prospective bridegroom's father to remark that he felt great regret at her death because she was of a nature, temper, and humour likely to make an excellent wife. It seems to have been the one idea in society then, that girls should marry young and become excellent wives. As there was also the general idea that for this end neither brains, learning, nor training were necessary, only a pleasing face, a pleasing manner, and a fortune, it is not to be wondered at that when the girl-wife grew older her starved capacities and nature revenged themselves upon the stupidity of her elders and developed the lower qualities inherent in all.

As the youthful Joscelyn was now left without a prospective wife, the only thing to do was to look for some one else, and when so many excellent family arrangements had been made, it was surely a pity to break through them. Lord Southampton had other daughters, and so Elizabeth was in turn betrothed to this scion of the Percy line, who received her the more eagerly that she was now sole heiress to the estates of her mother's father, Lord Chichester.

The two young people, he of the mature age of eighteen and she fourteen, were married in 1662, though they did not set up house together until a year



ELIZABETH WROTHESLEY, COUNTESS OF NORTHUMBERLAND

(*After Lely*)

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or two later. Their first child, a girl named Elizabeth, was born in 1666, and she was followed by a boy and another girl, the latter dying almost as soon as she drew breath. At this point the history of the young wife, who had just become the Countess of Northumberland, gets confused, one writer saying that she had a long illness consequent upon the loss of her children and was taken abroad by her husband to recover. But there is a letter written by Henry Sidney, of whom we have already heard and who still further figures in these pages, which throws a very different complexion upon the going abroad, and gives definite form to a rumour which connected her name with that of the King.

The birth of Elizabeth's third child, its death and that of the little boy took place in 1669, and in February, 1670, Sidney wrote to her sister, then Lady Vaughan, but later Lady Russell, that "my Lady Northumberland is grown so flippant since her adventure at Court (of which she has already informed your Ladyship), that now she trips it every day in St. James's Park, meets the person you wot of, and ogles and curtsies do pass at that rate that her friends, knowing not what to make of it, only pray that her honour may be safe." The "person" was Charles II, and her friends, particularly her husband, were so alarmed that he whisked his wife off to go ostensibly on the Continent. That Lord Northumberland was in no great anxiety about her physical health is proved by the fact that he settled Elizabeth in Paris and went off by himself for a tour to Italy. There, poor fellow, he contracted a fever, of which he died at Turin in May, 1670. With him

ended the long line of the House of Northumberland, excepting for his little daughter.

Infant marriages had a bad effect upon the standard of life in that they cheapened marriage. No sooner did a man or woman die than his or her bereaved partner looked around for a new mate ; with many the marriage state awakened no more sentiment than any other business arrangement, and though there is no record left us of the ideas and feelings of the young widowed Countess, there is little doubt but that many suitors at once came forward for her hand, for six thousand a year in those days was a very good additional income. She kept some establishment in Paris, but came back to England soon after her husband's death.

There is an absurd story told in the Hatton correspondence of how Harry Savile, brother to the Marquis of Halifax and Vice-Chamberlain to Charles, made her an offer of his heart. The Sunderlands had a number of people staying with them at Althorp, among them being Savile and the Countess. One night, when the house was all quiet, Savile, passing the lady's room, saw the door open, so went in and up to her bedside, “and there he calls Madam ! Madam ! till he wakens her, and says that he came to acquaint her with a passion he had long had, in the dark, for he durst not own it to her in the light. She, being mightily amazed to hear his voice, rung a bell by her bedside ; upon which presently her women in the next room began to stir. He begged her not to discover him, and so went away.” The Countess went to Lady Ashley's room and told her about it ; they then sent Will Russell, who went to

Harry Savile and warned him to quit the house at once. In the morning he and Lord Sunderland rode after him to fight him, but the King prevented it, and the foolish young man wisely disappeared for a time.

Mrs. Jameson, who loved sentiment better than history, suggests that the flirtation with the King happened now, only the advances were all on one side, and the lady to preserve her self-respect fled again to Paris. But there is no evidence to be found, and it is not unlikely that this little Royal affair began and ended early in the year. No woman could look at the King with any favour without at once having her reputation somewhat tarnished, and there seemed to be with these pretty women a regular progression of events in these matters; for first they allowed Charles to ogle them, and then James. Lady Northumberland was no exception to the rule. It was said that she aspired to fill the place so lately vacated by the Duchess Anne. Charles, James himself, Louis XIV with all his counsellors, and Louis de Kéroualle, all were hunting through Europe for a suitable mate for the Duke, and all the Catholic ladies at the Court were preening themselves on their eligibility, for had not the Duke said that he would only marry for love? Thus there was nothing surprising that the Countess of Northumberland's name was included with the rest, but the irresponsible and changeable Duke of Buckingham put the matter into written words, and so gave us the evidence. Knowing of Elizabeth's ambition, he offered to persuade the King to command James to marry her. In this scheme he included a proposition that the

infant Elizabeth, Lady Percy, should be by the King betrothed to Lord Harry (Barbara's second son), the Duke of Grafton.

Elizabeth became so magnificent in dress as to set all tongues wagging, and seeing that it was now generally known that Lady Belasyse had definitely withdrawn her claim, every one said that His Royal Highness would marry the Countess of Northumberland. This went so far that it was calmly stated that the idea was much liked by all the people and the Duke's servants. Elizabeth's sister, Lady Russell, hinted probably at the same idea when she wrote that the Countess could not decide some important matter until she saw the Duke of York, and that the report which she would then receive "which will be to-morrow, Friday, will certainly make her determine."

The King, however, as has been said, had no desire that his brother "should make a fool of himself a second time," and a little later the Duke was married by proxy to Mary of Modena, the announcement being made to James when surrounded by his friends. He was talking in the drawing-room, when the French ambassador (Monsieur de Croissy) brought the letters in and told the news; the Duke turned about and said, "Then I am a married man!" and it was explained to all present that it was the Princess of Modena.

The King, however, was very soft-hearted; he did not like to hurt these pretty women by autocratic measures; so knowing that Ralph Montagu had set his heart on marrying the Countess, he promised his consent to that marriage, and that he would raise

Montagu as high in dignity as her first husband had been. As for Elizabeth, she felt that now the only thing to do was to marry some one, and yet she hesitated, for marriage did not mean all gain to her. A clause in her late husband's will commanded that if she should remarry her little daughter should be taken from her and put into the hands of the Dowager Countess, a woman of strong will and overbearing disposition, and Elizabeth felt that she could only agree to run the risk of this if she could feel that King and Parliament could be called on to defend a mother's right.

Ralph Montagu had been paying her his addresses since the death of the Earl ; he had been made English ambassador at Paris in 1669, his entry into that city being so magnificent that it has scarce ever since been equalled. He was that Montagu who had unconsciously stirred the Comte de Gramont to fresh exertions in the pursuit of Mrs. Middleton, and who, according to the lively Frenchman, was "no very dangerous rival on account of his person, but very much to be feared for his assiduity, the acuteness of his wit, and for some other talents which are of importance when a man is once permitted to display them."

One of Montagu's talents was the power of telling at sight which woman had petticoats strong enough to drag him upwards if he held on to them. From being Master of the Horse to Anne of York, he took the same post under Queen Catherine. He made himself *persona grata* with the Duchess of Orleans, was present at her death, and did all he could to investigate the charge of poison. In Paris he could

not fail to meet the Countess of Northumberland, and he used all the arts of sympathy and a show of loyal friendship to attract her feelings.

In the winter of 1672 she went to Aix, and he followed her there, intending, if his suit did not prosper, to go on a journey into Italy just to prove to the world that he went abroad for pleasure and not for the sake of a pretty woman. However, if he did not get yea, he also did not get nay, and he returned to Paris in the wake of the Countess.

Elizabeth was one of the unfortunate children who had not even learned French, and now, though she lived among French people, she would not trouble to master their language. Madame de la Fayette comments on this when writing to Madame de Sévigné in April, 1673, and also upon the fact that she seems to have lost her good looks. “Madame de Northumberland came to see me yesterday . . . she seems to be a woman who has been beautiful, but who does not retain a single sign of it upon her face, nor the slightest air of youth; I was surprised at it; she was also very badly dressed, without grace; indeed, I was not at all dazzled. She seemed to understand all that was said very well, or rather all that I said, for I was alone. . . . Montagu asked me if she might come to see me, for we have often spoken of her together. He is by no means ashamed of his wooing, and appears full of hope.” Whatever she was then, the Countess recovered her beauty, for Evelyn speaks of her in 1683 as “the most beautiful Countess of Northumberland.”

A month later an old attachment on Montagu’s part for the Duchesse de Brissac nearly broke off

the match by reason of the Countess's jealousy. "Montagu has gone away," wrote Madame de la Fayette. "It is said that all his hopes are overthrown; I believe something has transpired to upset the lady."

At this point the Countess came home to make her attack upon the heart of James, Duke of York, and in a short time Montagu followed her to England. The King's promise and good will weighed heavily in the matter, and Elizabeth went down to Litchfield, her own estate in Hampshire, in August, 1673. There were many rumours, first that she was married, then that she was not, but at last the deed was done. Lord Montagu settled £2000 a year upon his son, and Elizabeth settled her estate upon her husband for his life, if she had no other children. The day after the wedding the Dowager Countess sent to claim her grandchild. Elizabeth refused to part with her, and the expected battle began. Rumour betrothed the little one straight away to Lord Harry (Grafton) and made the Countess a Duchess.

Before the second month of the marriage had passed violent quarrels broke out between the pair, as Elizabeth learned in some way that Montagu had "bought her of her maid for £500 per annum," and in consequence of this she demanded a separation. But the matter was patched up somehow, and in December we find that she was ill through worry — her husband having so far forgotten himself as to start a brawl in the King's drawing-room, for which he was sent to the Tower. While he was standing in a circle round the King the Duke of Buckingham came in hurriedly and pulled Montagu

by the shoulder that he might make way, whereupon arose a childish dispute—"I will pass!" "You shall not!"—which was followed by a challenge from Montagu. His incarceration did not last long, and he was released, under order to remain confined in his own house until the King's pleasure should be known.

The Countess must have been a delicate woman, as in 1680 she was so very ill that every one thought she would die, and a few years later she did die, when only about forty years old.

The dispute about her daughter became acute, and those interested had to appear before the Lord Chancellor. The old Countess and her father, Lord Suffolk, and Ralph Montagu argued the matter there, and the mother and grandmother, the two Lady Northumerlands, then met at Northumberland House, and argued the proposition already laid down. The Countess offered to give up her right to the possession of the child on condition that she might have her on a visit for ten days or a month sometimes, and she was determined to bind her mother-in-law not to contract Elizabeth in marriage without her consent. On the part of herself and Mr. Montagu she undertook that they would enter into the same bonds, and would not arrange any marriage without the grandmother's consent. The old woman refused all compromise, and would not even listen with any patience. Lady Russell concludes her remarks upon this matter with: "I hope for an accommodation. My sister urges, it is hard her child [that if she have no other children must be her heir] should be disposed of without her consent; and in my judgment it is

hard." How the details of this matter ended it is not easy to say, but the grandmother kept the child and married her as many times as she thought fit.

It was not so long after her marriage, two or three years, that the Countess of Northumberland—for she retained her title until her husband became the Earl of Montagu—had to bear with her husband's infidelity. Her rival was Barbara Cleveland, who had at last left the Court of Charles, and on settling in Paris was much offended that the French ladies did not regard her as a person of importance; so as it was impossible for her to live without gaiety—or without a lover—she consoled herself by carrying on an intrigue with Ralph Montagu, who had again been appointed Ambassador Extraordinary to Louis XIV. Barbara had her daughter, the Countess of Sussex, with her, a girl for whom her father, or supposed father, Charles, had much affection, and who had pleased him by becoming a devoted adorer of Louise de Kéroualle. This latter fact infuriated Barbara, who made many ineffectual attempts to part the girl from the hated rival. At last, on the plea of going away, she seems to have succeeded, and for better security she placed her daughter as inmate of a convent. While Barbara herself was absent from Paris on a visit, Montagu, it is said on Charles's instruction, persuaded Lady Sussex to leave the convent and take up her abode at the English Embassy.

The Duchess was furious on her return, suspected, wrongly or rightly, that Montagu had transferred his affections from herself to her child, and set to

work to ruin the ambassador. She revealed all his political intrigues to Charles, and told him among many other things that Montagu despised both him (Charles) and his brother, and wished with all his heart that Parliament would send them both travelling, for the King, he said, was a dull, governable fool, and the Duke a wilful fool. "So that it were yet better to have you than him, but that you always choose a greater beast than yourself to govern you." That, of course, lost Montagu his post and all favour, and he found himself shunned when he rushed back to England to save himself.

Lady Montagu's four children, like herself, seem not to have been strong, and they are only noted in correspondence when they have been ill; thus on one occasion we find Lady Montagu fearing small-pox for her son, and on another Lady Russell writes: "I hear by my sister Montagu she found a sickly family in Paris: her daughter in a languishing condition, worn to nothing almost by a fever, which has hung about her for the last six months."

Lady Montagu—her husband had succeeded his father as Lord Montagu in 1683—must have felt considerable pain and trouble over the affairs of her eldest daughter, for the grandmother was true to her determination to dispose of the child's hand as the fancy took her. Lady Cleveland had schemed vigorously in 1675–6 to obtain the little Elizabeth as bride to her eldest boy, the Duke of Southampton, though four or five years earlier he had been married to Mary, daughter of Sir Henry Wood. But the Duchess, with her airy ideas of morality, was confident that she could override all legal obstructions, and

that may have been so, but she had the redoubtable old Countess with whom to deal, who both outwitted and defeated her. It is stated by one authority that Charles II in 1679 demanded the hand of Elizabeth Percy for his natural son by the Duchess of Portsmouth, but there is no corroboration of this, and as the girl was then thirteen and the little Duke of Richmond only six, it seems scarcely possible that such an arrangement should have been suggested. This Royal honour is also said to have been refused.

It is impossible to say whether, in regulating this child's life, the old Countess was actuated by spite against her daughter-in-law, by a grim determination to rule, or whether match-making was an irresistible occupation to her. It was not ambition which moved her, for the men she chose as fit mates for her granddaughter were in no way superior in birth to the little girl, one was not even her equal; and it could not have been a desire for wealth, for Elizabeth was too rich herself to need more money. Whatever the reason, a few weeks after Charles's offer is said to have been refused, the child was married to "the ugliest and saddest creature," Henry Cavendish, the Earl of Ogle, a sickly boy of fifteen, heir to the Duke of Newcastle. It was arranged that this undesirable young husband should take the name of Percy and travel for two years before settling down with his wife, who would then be fifteen. Fortunately for every one, except, perhaps, himself, he died when half-way through his continental travels, thus giving to the old Countess the joyful occupation of finding another grandson-in-law.

This time she chose some one very different, but

even more objectionable, a certain Thomas Thynne, known to his contemporaries and in history as Tom of Ten Thousand because of his wealth, a man who was so stupid that he was thus lampooned by Rochester :

“ Who’d be a wit in Dryden’s cudgelled skin,
Or who’d be rich and senseless like Tom Thynne ? ”

In negotiating this marriage the old Countess and those who helped her, for there is more than a hint of accomplices, did a shameful thing. She could only bring the marriage about by lying on every point to the child who, being still in mourning, was not allowed to receive suitors personally. As soon as the date of her mourning expired she was married with the following results, told by Sir Charles Lyttelton :

“ My Lady Ogle went up yesterday with her grandmother to the old Change, and there slipt from her, and ’tis not yet known who is gone with her, nor whither she is gone. But, last night, Dick Bret came to the King and told him he had waited on him before to acquaint His Majesty that she was not married to Mr. Thynne, but now he was come to tell him she is married to him. The King says she has been unworthily and basely betrayed by her friends.” Others to whom Elizabeth dared speak in confidence record that the girl had railed at those who induced her to marry, for they made her believe Tom Thynne had £20,000 a year, that he was of high family and was but twenty-three years old. After the ceremony she refused to live with him, and vowed she never would either meet him or allow him to see her.

It was also said that Thynne had practically bought her by giving bonds for vast sums of money to her relatives. In addition to all this, this "well-battered rake," as Mr. Thomas Seccombe calls him, was married or contracted in marriage to a daughter of Lady Trevor.

The little Elizabeth took refuge with Lady Temple at the Hague, and her distressed mother had sufficient influence to secure a year's respite for her daughter from the mercenary husband and grandmother, during which the married pair were not to meet.

All this pother was caused by the child's wealth, for she was a very great heiress, holding in her own right six of the oldest baronies of England, those of Percy, Lucy, Poynings, Fitz-Payne, Bryan, and Latimer. As Thynne could not have his bride he claimed her property, and the proctors decided in his favour, while a definite promise was exacted that his wife in name would return at the end of a year to be his wife in reality.

An unsuccessful suitor for this girl's hand was Count John Philip Königsmarck, who sent from France two challenges to Thynne by Captain Vratz, one of his followers. Thynne's answer was to send six men over the Channel to murder both Königsmarck and his men. As this failed, Vratz unsuccessfully tried to bring about a duel between Thynne and himself; but the affair was actually ended by murder. Vratz with two accomplices shot Thynne when driving down Fleet Street in his coach. Königsmarck hid, and when found was adjudged as not guilty, while his three tools were hanged. In the southern aisle of Westminster Abbey may still be seen a monu-

ment to Tom Thynne, who was certainly “no better than he should be,” with a representation of the murder chiselled on the front. The legend upon the tomb was so absurdly laudatory, giving him such a virtuous character (Thynne himself must have laughed could he have read it), that it was subsequently removed. There were many rumours about Thynne’s death, one being, not unnaturally, that Lady Ogle had promoted quarrels between the two men on purpose to rid herself of her husband. Swift brought up this scandal in some lampoon years later, when Lady Ogle had become the Duchess of Somerset, and in angry revenge she is said to have gone on her knees to Queen Anne, praying her not to confer a certain bishopric, which he coveted, upon the Dean.

While these marriages were arranged and disarranged the girl was resentful concerning her mother. She had evidently been so well tutored by her grandmother as to accept her opinions in opposition to those of her own parent. We find the Dowager asserting that if her grand-daughter preferred the addresses of my Lord Ogle to any others she should accept them, and we also find Lady Russell writing to her little niece just after her first marriage, praying that she may have good fortune and know happiness to a good old age, but adding that she could not believe she would have complete happiness while being estranged from her mother, and offering all help in her power towards a reconciliation. “No applications can now be too earnest to obtain her pardon, nor could have been to have prevented the misfortune of her displeasure, whose tender kindness you cannot but be aware of.”

A few months after Thynne's death Lady Ogle, who had asserted that she absolutely refused again to consider marriage unless she herself approved of the match, was pleased to regard the Duke of Somerset as a suitor, and after falling ill of the measles and recovering, she married him in 1682. In later life this man was known as "the proud Duke." He never allowed his children to sit down in his presence, and had the roads cleared by outriders when he travelled. "Get out of the way," said one of his outriders to a countryman, "my lord Duke is coming, and does not choose to be looked upon." The man snatched up his pig in a rage, and holding it up at the carriage window, shouted, "But I shall see him, and my pig shall see him too!" When the Duke had married a second time, and his young wife tapped him with her fan, he remarked sternly: "Madam, my first wife was a Percy, and *she* never took such a liberty." There is another story told to the effect that he insisted that his two daughters should take turns in standing in the room while he had his afternoon doze in his arm-chair. One day when it was Lady Charlotte's turn she was so tired that she sat down, and her loving father inconveniently woke up. He fixed her with his stern, parental eye, and told her in dreadful voice that he would find means to make her regret her want of decorum. When he died it was found that he had left her in his will, by way of punishment, £20,000 less than her sister received.

But this is going far from Lady Montagu, whose life was drawing to its close. During the trial of Lord Russell she was in Paris with her two weakly

children ; and later, when the whole terrible affair was discussed in the first Parliament of William III, and the execution was then denounced as a “murder,” we find her writing with loving sympathy to the sister who was thus forced to live over again the agony of her bereavement. Her husband, like her father, built a great house in Bloomsbury, Montagu House, which became in course of time the British Museum, and later was rebuilt. Evelyn speaks of it as a stately and ample palace, and especially praises Verrio’s fresco paintings—“the funeral pile of Dido on the staircase, the labours of Hercules, a fight with the Centaurs, his effeminacy with Dejanira and Apotheosis or reception among the Gods, on the walls and roofs of the great room above.” The riot of form and colour, so beloved by those of Stuart times, can be well imagined by those who study the ceilings of the stairway, on their way to see the Beauties of Hampton Court. When Elizabeth died in 1690 Lady Russell was much troubled, for she loved her tenderly. She wrote : “There is something in the younger going before me, that I have observed all my life to give a sense I can’t describe ; it is harder to be borne than a bigger loss, where there has been spun out a longer thread of life. After above forty years’ acquaintance with so amiable a creature, one must needs, in reflecting, bring to remembrance so many engaging endearments as are yet at present embittering and painful.”

Ralph Montagu became notorious by his second marriage, which he made two years after the death of his wife. He chose the lady for her money, and cared

nothing for the fact that her pride and wealth had turned her brain. She was Elizabeth—how this name recurs!—eldest daughter of Henry Cavendish, the second Duke of Newcastle, and was the widow of the Duke of Albemarle. She declared that she would only marry a monarch, so Montagu, working upon this craze, was introduced to her as the Emperor of China, and married her, always humouring her, one historian says, in her delusion that she was by her marriage an Empress. However, he kept her in such seclusion, confined on the ground floor of Montagu House, that it was rumoured that she was dead and that her death was not made public as her husband wished to retain the £7000 a year which would go to some one else at her demise. She, however, outlived him, being served on her knees to the day of her death, which occurred in 1734, when she was ninety-six.

Lord Ross, who was also anxious to secure this lady for a wife, wrote the following verses upon them both :

“ Insulting rival, never boast
Thy conquest lately won ;
No wonder if her heart was lost :
Her senses first were gone.

“ From one that’s under Bedlam’s laws
What glory can be had ?
For love of thee was not the cause ;
It proves that she was mad.”

Of the three sons born to Montagu and the Countess of Northumberland only one, John, survived, and succeeded to the dukedom. He showed all his life a singularly bright and gay disposition, being

without the moral obliquity from which his father suffered. Ralph Montagu was, however, possessed of good and generous qualities to balance those that were less amiable ; indeed, he was the sort of man who made warm friends and bitter enemies.

CHAPTER XII

HENRIETTA BOYLE, COUNTESS OF ROCHESTER

“Virtue, like happy nations, has no history.”

THIS picture, labelled Lady Rochester, was for a long time regarded as the portrait of Elizabeth Mallet, the girl whom Wilmot, Lord Rochester, dragged out of her coach when she was returning from taking supper with Frances Stuart, with the intention of eloping with her, and who, indeed, soon after married that dissolute Earl. It has since been proved, however, to be the picture of Henrietta—or Harietta—Boyle, the daughter of Richard Boyle, Earl of Burlington and Earl of Cork, and wife of Lawrence Hyde, the second son of the great Clarendon. Lawrence was given the title of Earl of Rochester in 1682, after the death of Wilmot, and while he was at the height of his power under Charles II, being known then as “the great favourite.” It is true that Lely died in 1680, but though the portrait must have been painted earlier, the legend upon it would naturally be changed when the original was raised to greater rank. It was in 1665 that Lawrence Hyde married Henrietta, receiving with her a dowry of £10,000.

It would be a relief—were it not attended with great difficulty—at last to find a subject against whom the chroniclers of the day have spoken no ill; yet having nothing notorious to tell about Lady Rochester,

they are content with telling nothing at all, for the life of the thoughtful wife and mother does not afford sensational matter for a biography. With such a man as Lawrence Hyde, however, she could scarcely have been a thoroughly happy wife ; he was totally wanting in that quality which belongs to the person who is master of his soul, and comes but seldom to the man who has been thrust into a position of power by circumstance rather than by achievement — the quality of self-control. His attainments were strengthened and improved by his diplomatic experience, but he had never learned the art of governing or concealing his emotions. In prosperity he was boastful and insolent ; in adversity he was mortified and despairing, easily moved to anger, and in anger saying bitter, unforgivable things which he soon forgot, but which the hearers would sometimes remember as long as they lived. He was self-sufficient and impatient ; had the necessary quality for a good orator, but could never successfully take part in a debate, as it was the easiest thing in the world for his opponents to make him angry, and then he lost his head and was entirely at their mercy. Scarcely, it may be imagined, a pleasant man with whom to live, and it is probable that his wife suffered too much from his temper not to efface herself willingly. Yet he seems to have had a great affection for her.

There is evidence in family letters that she was not strong. Lord Clarendon writes to his brother on one occasion : “ God Almighty preserve you and my sister and all yours. I am very much afraid lest this change should make impression on my sister’s tender health ; but she has seen such variety of changes in



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(*After Lely*)

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our poor family, that I doubt not her wisdom and resolution if her strength do not fail her."

In spite of her bad health, Lady Rochester always took an interest in the Court and in current events, and did her best to uphold her husband in his position and his ambitions. Her daughter Henrietta was maid of honour to the Queen, and Lady Rochester was always kind to the young girls she saw growing up around her and would do anything she could to assure their happiness. One of her favourites was Mary Evelyn, the diarist's well-beloved daughter, and Lady Rochester intended suggesting her as maid of honour to Catherine as soon as a vacancy occurred. But Charles died, and a month later the girl also died of smallpox, leaving her father very disconsolate.

Lady Rochester, however, was not always ill, she carried out her social duties with the pleasant affability of a kindly woman, for there are notes of dinner-parties given by her which by no means suggest that she suffered from permanent bad health.

As for her family, she bore two sons and four daughters; the eldest, Lady Anne Hyde, was said to have been very beautiful. Poor child! long before she was grown to maturity, at an age when our own daughters are still wearing short frocks and pigtails and carrying school satchels, she was married—being not fifteen—to a boy of nineteen, the Earl of Ossory, grandson to the Duke of Ormond. Less than three years later she died, of a second and premature confinement. "To die young and beloved is not a misfortune; it is to die half an angel," is the fatuous conclusion of Mrs. Jameson upon her death. Most girls would, it may be believed, prefer to be allowed to grow up

sensibly and then take their part in life than to be made "half an angel" in such circumstances. She seems to have been a vivacious, gentle girl, yet of a superstitious tendency, and it is possible that her imaginative temperament contributed somewhat to the fatal result of her illness.

She was living with her father-in-law in Dublin Castle, and a short time before her death Dr. John Hough, later Bishop of Worcester, was going to sit down at dinner with the family, when he noticed that there were already twelve people at the table. With his hand on his chair he hesitated, looked round, and refused to make one of the party, upon which Anne, guessing his reason, said, "Sit down, Doctor, it is now too late; it will make no difference whether you sit or go away." So pressed by all the company he made the thirteenth at dinner. He afterwards said that he believed that the incident affected her, as she was at the time in bad health, subject to fainting fits and hysteria. Dr. Hough also tells another story of her sensitiveness at this period, which shows that death was certainly in her thoughts—which is scarcely wonderful, seeing that she was only seventeen, and called upon to endure for a second time all the agony of maternity, and that at a time when all knowledge was wanting as to how to alleviate such suffering. She dreamed that some one came and knocked upon her chamber door; which made her call to her servant to see who was there; the servant not answering, she opened the door herself, and on the threshold saw a lady muffled up in a hood. Drawing the hood aside, the visitor showed herself to be Lady Kildare, who had died recently. Then Lady Anne cried out,

"Sister, is it you? Why do you come in this manner?" Upon which Lady Kildare answered, "Don't be frightened, for I am come on a very serious affair; and it is to tell you that you will die very soon." If she believed in omens this dream must have seriously affected her. She died on January 25th, 1685; but her mother knew nothing of it for a week. Her despairing husband, Lord Ossory, remarried in a few months!

A year later Lord Rochester wrote some "*Meditations*" on the anniversary of his daughter's death, part of which runs: "I think I had wrote from hence to her after the time she was dead, with the hopes that my letter would find her better; with expressions of tenderness for the sickness she had endured; of wishes for her recovery; of hopes of being in a short time happy in her company; of joy and comfort to myself, in being designed to go to live again in the same place with her—I say, I had written all this—to whom? to my poor dead child! . . . In the midst of this I had my wife lying weak and worn with long and continual sickness, and now, as it were, knocked quite on the head with this cruel blow;—a wife for whom I had all the tenderness imaginable, with whom I had lived long and happily, and had reason to be well pleased; whose fainting heart and weak spirits I was to comfort and to keep up when I had none myself." To this he added that he was resolved to retire into privacy and contemplation.

As this last sentence was written it gave the appearance that his intended retirement was the result of his grief and his wife's condition. A slightly cynical biographer points out, that he does not add that

February 2nd of that year had been fixed by the King for an investigation, suggested by his enemy Halifax, of the Treasury books under his control, and that the rumour was abroad that he "would be turned out of all and sent to the Tower." However, as Charles was taken ill on the first and died on the sixth of February, Rochester's broken heart was mended and his high resolve was broken in its stead—for ten days later he was made Lord Treasurer.

King James hoped to make him become a papist, and after some discussion with him appointed a day for a conference. One story goes that Rochester had received notice that he would be asked to resign his post as Treasurer, and he assumed that the cause of this was his religion. The Countess of Rochester was very ill at the time, having after a long interval given birth to a daughter, and wrote to the Queen, begging she would honour her so far as to come and see her, as she wished to discourse upon an important matter. Mary of Modena went and stayed two hours, listening to the Countess's version of what enemies were plotting against them and of the evil that was threatening. During the conversation the Queen said that all the Protestants in the kingdom were turning against them, there were none whom they could trust, and it was necessary to put reliable people into high position. Upon this Anne answered, that her lord was not so wedded to his opinion as not to be ready to be better instructed. This incident was by some said to give rise to the conference, and Burnet adds that a conference on this subject was not proposed until it was well assured that the person for whom it was appointed had decided to join the King's religion.

Rochester denied that he had any such intention, lamenting that his wife had spoken without his permission. As he also received private information that no matter what he decided he could not retain his post, he went to the conference in no conciliatory mood. When it was his turn to speak he spoke "with much heat and spirit, and not without some scorn, becoming more and more vehement; so that the King in anger broke up the conference."

In compensation for the loss of his white staff which followed, Rochester received £4000 a year and several grants. His wife's illness terminated fatally, she dying in her forty-second year at Bath, on April 12th, 1687, being survived twenty-five years by her husband.

CHAPTER XIII

ANNE DIGBY, COUNTESS OF SUNDERLAND

“A Proteus, ever acting in disguise ;
A finished statesman, intricately wise ;
A second Machiavel, who soar’d above
The little ties of gratitude and love.”

Contemporary Lampoon.

LORD BRISTOL had a daughter named Anne, who, judging from most sources, inherited something of her father’s love of intrigue, while being probably of stronger intellect than he was. As a girl we are told that she was pretty, delicate-looking, and exceedingly fair ; and she was just at the age to enjoy gaiety when her father was replaced in Royal favour after the Restoration. As long as he lived Evelyn was her warm friend and admirer, which goes far to prove, not only her ability, but her amiability ; but she was a “born intrigante,” and there is little doubt that she and her husband worked hand-in-hand, sometimes too short-sighted to see the full result of their actions and then eagerly catching at the most likely means of saving themselves from disaster, in which endeavour they failed on rare occasions. Anne found a warm apologist in Mrs. Jameson, who, however, was so partial in her opinions as to be unreliable. She drew the wary lady as something of a saint painfully threading the thorny paths of a very wicked world, and she



ANNE DIGEY, COUNTESS OF SUNDERLAND

(*After Lely*)

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kept a discreet silence upon such evidence of levity as is furnished by Pepys, or Barillon, or even Anne's own letters to her husband's uncle, the handsome Henry Sidney, Earl of Romney, who once created such a furore in the household of the Duke and Duchess of York. However, the historian's task is to put down what is written, and to piece together the fragmentary evidences which remain of a life, without blaming or praising.

We first hear of the girl as a charming addition to the early Court of Charles II, and then as being wooed by Robert Spencer, the second Earl of Sunderland, son of Dorothy, Lady Sunderland, Waller's Sacharissa. This was probably a match which well suited the ambition of the Earl of Bristol, who was seeking on every side to consolidate his position ; whether—in spite of the fortune it would eventually bring—it equally well pleased the bridegroom's family there is reason to doubt, and there came a time when it seems not to have pleased the bridegroom himself, but the actual reason for this has been lost. The date of the wedding was fixed for July, 1663, and on the first day of the month Pepys tells us that though the wedding clothes were made, the portion agreed on, and everything ready, the Earl of Sunderland had gone away, no one knew where. But he sent Anne a letter releasing her from her engagement with him, and giving no reason for his action. He also advised his friends not to inquire into the matter ; they might think and say what they liked, if only they would not ask him anything. He had had enough of it and was as definitely resolved not to marry Anne as he was resolved not to explain why.

Of course one must remember that Pepys is only repeating gossip, which may have been exaggerated, but the French ambassador at Whitehall, the Comte de Comminges, wrote to the Marquis de Lionne, who was the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in Paris, that the evening before the day fixed for the marriage Lord Sunderland went away and gave orders to one of his friends to break off the match, a proceeding which greatly surprised every one at Court and which disgusted the King, who blamed the Earl in the highest degree.

Whether the fault was in Anne—the writer in the *Dictionary of National Biography* suggests that “if the young earl’s fears were due to a suspicion that he had met his match in duplicity, they were probably not unfounded”—or in her lover, or whether the latter was tired of hearing about Lord Bristol, it is impossible to say. The Earl of Bristol was in disgrace just then, having reported that Sir Richard Temple had said treasonable things in conversation; for this he was summoned to the Bar of the House of Commons to prove or defend his words. There he seemed to think that the best defence lay in a flippant jocularity, making “a comedian-like speech, delivered with such action as did not become his lordship, confessing that he did tell the King such a thing of Sir Richard Temple, but that the words he repeated had not been spoken by him, he himself having enlarged upon what was said.” This defence was made after the flight of Lord Sunderland, who, however, one writer suggests, may have been tired out with the notoriety of his prospective father-in-law.

Whatever the cause, and whatever the means taken to set matters right, the marriage was definitely put off, and for a considerable time the lovers did not meet. Then either inclination reasserted itself or counsel prevailed, for the estranged pair were reconciled and married on June 10th, 1665, at St. Vedast's, in the city of London, nearly two years after it was first intended.

In studying Anne Digby's life it is difficult not to accept Princess Anne's estimate of her, written in a letter to her sister in the spring of 1688—a letter which Mrs. Jameson says contained "the most vulgar and virulent abuse."

After discussing Lord Sunderland the Princess adds : "His lady too is as extraordinary in her kind ; for she is a flattering, dissembling, false woman ; but she has so fawning and endearing a way, that she will deceive anybody at first, and it is not possible to find out all her ways in a little time. Then she has had her gallants, though may be not so many as some ladies here, and with all these good qualities she is a constant church woman ; so that to outward appearance, one would take her for a saint, and, to hear her talk, you would think she is a very good Protestant, but she is as much the one as the other, for it is certain that her lord does nothing without her." A week later the outspoken Princess also wrote : "She runs from church to church after the famousest preachers, and keeps such a clatter with her devotions that it really turns one's stomach. Sure there never was a couple so well matched as she and her husband ; for as she is throughout in all her actions the greatest jade that ever was, so is

he the subtlest workingest villain that is on the face of the earth."

This desire to be all things to all men must have been inherent in Lady Sunderland's nature, for in 1667, and also in 1688, we find John Evelyn writing letters to her upon such subjects as books of devotion, and her courage and Christian fortitude. "I look upon it as a peculiar grace and favour of God to Your Ladyship that, amidst so many temptations, and grandeur of courts, the attendants, visits, diversions, you are resolved that nothing of all this shall interrupt your duty to God, and the religion you profess, whenever it comes into competition with the things of this world."

Evelyn saw the Countess often, yet as he did not altogether live in her circle, he probably did not know of many things that happened there. That he was sincere in his belief in her personal religion and devotion there can be no doubt, and it is quite possible that the lady did not find devotion incompatible with intrigue, both political and amorous.

Sunderland took a shady by-way into Royal favour by making great friends with the Duchess of Cleveland, and when her influence waned he transferred his attentions to Louise Renée de Kéroualle, the Duchess of Portsmouth. The former was often invited to Althorp, his country house, where play was the amusement; and the latter was known at his town house in Queen Street to win enormous sums of him at basset. His wife was his strong ally, ready always to gain the end in view by intrigue of any kind. She was one of those who initiated the plan of the absurd wedding which reconciled Louise de

Kéroualle to her position in England, and later she did her best to ingratiate herself with Mary of Modena.

The Earl was despatched, in 1671, upon an embassy to Spain, and the next year was appointed Ambassador Extraordinary to the French King. Later he was admitted to the Privy Council at Windsor and was made a Gentleman of the Bedchamber.

Evelyn speaks of taking a farewell dinner with Lady Sunderland before she went to Paris with her husband on his appointment, concerning which he says : “ She made me stay dinner at Leicester House, and afterwards sent for Richardson, the famous fire-eater. He devoured brimstone on glowing coal before us, chewing and swallowing them ; he melted a beer glass and ate it quite up ; then, taking a live coal on his tongue, he put on it a raw oyster, the coal was blown on with bellows till it flamed and sparkled in his mouth, and so remained till the oyster gaped and was quite boiled. Then he melted pitch and wax with sulphur, which he drank down as it flamed ; I saw it flaming in his mouth for a good while ; he also took up a thick piece of iron, such as laundresses use to put in their smoothing boxes, when it was fiery hot, held it between his teeth, then in his hand, and threw it about like a stone ; but this I observed he cared not to hold very long ; then he stood on a small pot, and, bending his body, took a glowing iron with his mouth from between his feet, without touching the pot or ground with his hands ; with divers other prodigious feats.”

Verily a wonderful fire-eater !

On another occasion Evelyn went with Lady

Sunderland to dine with her mother, Lady Bristol, at Chelsea, in the great house at the north end of Beaufort Row, formerly belonging to the Duke of Buckingham and known by his name, but later bought by the Duke of Beaufort, and called Beaufort House. He tells us that the house was ill-contrived, though being a spacious and excellent place for the extent of ground about it, and that there was in the garden a rare collection of orange trees, “of which she was pleased to bestow some upon me.”

The allusions in Evelyn to his meetings with the Countess and with the Earl are innumerable, and generally are of much the same tenor. On more than one occasion Evelyn is desired to be go-between in a matrimonial arrangement. On May 16th, 1681, Lady Sunderland has begun to feel desirous to settle her son, Lord Spencer, who could not have been then more than fifteen years of age. The little woman she desired for the bride was Jane, the twelve-year-old daughter of Sir Stephen Fox. Poor Evelyn says : “ I excused myself all I was able ; for the truth is, I was afraid he would prove an extravagant man : for, though a youth of extraordinary parts, and had an excellent education to render him a worthy man, yet his early inclinations to extravagance made me apprehensive that I should not serve Sir Stephen by proposing it, like a friend ; this being now his only daughter, well bred, and likely to receive a large share of her father’s opulence. . . . However, so earnest and importunate was the Countess, that I did mention it to Sir Stephen, who said that it was too great an honour, that his daughter was very young as well as my Lord, and he was resolved never to marry her

without the parties' mutual liking ; with other objections which I neither would nor could contradict." The sensible baronet added that he did not think his girl capable of feeling or expressing a preference until she was sixteen or seventeen years old, and begged Evelyn to put the matter off as civilly as he could.

Lord Sunderland had at this time fallen out of favour with the King for having sided with the Commons about the succession, which, adds Evelyn acutely, "he did not do out of his own inclination, or for the preservation of the Protestant religion ; but because he mistook the ability of the party to carry it." He was also a great gamester, and by his prodigalities had much lessened his estate. This prejudiced Sir Stephen Fox against the match, for Lord Sunderland made no secret of his doings, as his wife proves to us in a letter to his uncle, Henry Sidney, in which she says : " My Lord has fallen again to play to a more violent degree than ever, all day and night. It makes the horridest noise in the world : 'tis talked of in all the coffee-houses, and 'tis for such vast sums—he plays for £5000 in a night at *la Basset*."

Henry Sidney was but a year older than his nephew and was of an appearance and manner calculated to win any impressionable woman's heart. Bishop Burnet says of him that he was "a graceful man, and one who had lived long in the Court, where he had some adventures that became very public. He was a man of a sweet and caressing temper, had no malice in his heart, but too great a love of pleasure."

Whether there really existed an intrigue between him and his nephew's wife it is now impossible to say. Both Lord and Lady Sunderland were of so crafty a disposition that they might have been capable of giving a public impression to that effect as a cloak for their political scheming. While Sunderland was the trusted adviser of King James he was keeping up a secret correspondence with William of Orange, through his wife in England and Henry Sidney near the Prince. Lady Sunderland's letters to Sidney are very different from those she sent to Evelyn; in them is nothing of religion or devotion, but much of politics, written partly in cipher, and many warm expressions of concern about Sidney's welfare.

Rightly or wrongly, Sunderland was suspected of planning to put Monmouth on the throne, and he is credited with offering to the Duchess of Portsmouth to obtain the succession to the throne for her son, the Duke of Richmond. Later on he was one who, while outwardly loyal, did his best by betraying English plans and occurrences to give William of Orange the chance of wearing the English crown. The Sunderlands were always looking forward, preparing for eventualities while hanging with all their strength to the present disposition of affairs. By these means Sunderland made himself useful to three kings, yet eventually lived an idle, unhappy life, exiled to his country house for several years before he died. It was while he was intriguing with William that the correspondence was carried on between Anne and Sidney, and taking into account the fact that the

letters of that day were of a stilted, reserved character, some of those written by Lady Sunderland show a very ardent feeling for the absent cavalier. "I won't go about to tell you the pain I have been in for your being so sick, and consequently the comfort it is to me to hear you are better, and then how all joyed I am to think we shall have you here awhile with us." "I am overjoyed at your being able to come hither so soon. Pray God send you well. . . . I will be sure to do whatever you will have me, and I shall be more pleased than I can express if ever I can serve you in anything." "I can think of nothing with any patience unless you come over. I am confident you will never recover your health where you are; therefore, pray come away; though you be lifted in your bed into the yacht, pray do. I will take care to have your lodgings ready here, and good ones at Windsor,* though your own cannot be ready this year." "I hope you will receive an everlasting reward for all the trouble and pains you take in a good cause, and that it will succeed to your heart's desire. I cannot but lament at the signs I see of your being kept longer from this poor closet, where I wish you very often in a day, and hope I am not mistaken in thinking my mind and yours agree in that particular."

Over-friendly as these letters are to a man who can in no way be classed with the ordinary avuncular relation, they might have been put down to an over-expansive sentimentality, but that Lady Sunderland was in no way troubled by that quality, and

* Where Lady Sunderland passed some of her time on duty.

there is on record a damaging retort made by her husband to Barillon, the French ambassador. Bonrepos, another French emissary in England, also reported the same fact to his master Louis.

As has been said, part of Anne's letters to Sidney were written in cipher, but even then she believed them opened and their contents made known to the King, though it is probable that the ciphers were not translated. In July, 1678, Barillon wrote to Louis XIV concerning the letters which for some time Lady Sunderland had been writing "to Mr. Sidney, who is with the Prince of Orange and stands well with him. The King of England has had knowledge of these letters, which Lady Sunderland, however, disowns, and my Lord Sunderland gets out of the matter by saying that even if these letters from his wife were not forged it would be impossible that he could have had any part in them, seeing that it was only too well known that his wife was suspected of having an amorous intrigue with Sidney, and that it was not probable that he would put his fortune and his life into the hands of a man whom he ought to hate."

Where lay truth or falsehood in this matter it is now impossible to say, but whether Anne and Sidney were guilty, or whether the Earl's excuse was an arranged thing among the three of them, our respect for the lady is not increased, indeed, we sympathize a little with Queen Anne in her condemnation of this Madame Facing-both-ways.

There is one other thing which Lady Sunderland knew full well, a little secret which all people in

England and many on the Continent were anxious to know, but which has—because of human incredulity—never been really satisfactorily settled. She knew whether a prince was really born to Mary Beatrice that Easter night of 1688 in the curtained alcove of the Queen's bedroom, but even concerning this affair she could not speak straightforwardly.

Surely it was a situation without parallel, if the birth was a fraud ! Here was a woman intriguing with the Prince of Orange, hoping to get into his good graces when he should be powerful, and to that end betraying the secrets of English diplomacy. She was aided and abetted by her husband and by her lover, and the husband that he might safeguard himself on every side became a Catholic, assuring Barillon, the servant of William's greatest enemy, Louis XIV, of his attachment to that monarch. While his wife was giving her country away to the Dutch Prince, he was giving it away to the French King, to such an extent that Barillon suggested to Louis that nothing less than a pension of £6000 a year to his lordship would meet the case. Concurrently with this, Lady Sunderland was, according to one account, one of the only two ladies who were present at the bedside of Mary when her baby was born, Lady Belasyse being the other, but when she was examined later concerning the matter her answers were as evasive and double as her whole conduct.

It is not possible to discuss this event here : the accounts were so varying and opposed that no one will ever be quite certain as to the truth, though the

evidence weighs down heavily on Mary Beatrice's side. The assertions were : that a child was born ; that no birth took place ; that the child died immediately and another was substituted ; that the second child died of fits in a week or two and a third was put in its place ; that the King and eighteen Councillors stood in a row facing the alcove behind the closed curtains of which lay the Queen ; that the side curtains were drawn away, and when the Queen was in great pain the Chancellor and the Privy Councillors came to the bedside to show they were there ! So the stories contradicted each other, and no one was satisfied. When all was over Lady Sunderland came forward to announce the safe delivery of a child, and on being asked as to its sex, touched her forehead, upon which James said he knew it was a boy.

A few months later the King, the Queen, one of the three babies mentioned, some of the Councillors, and Lady Sunderland were seeking safety on other shores.

In September, 1688, Anne wrote to Sidney asking his advice as to the place they should fly to, and at the same time assuring him that William of Orange had not a more faithful servant than herself in England. In October she wrote a pious letter to Evelyn, saying that "God governs the world and will certainly do what is best for those that serve Him," and then in November came the dramatic and painful flight from England. Before the King fled, however, Sunderland was disgraced, for James discovered that the original draft of a treaty between himself and Louis XIV was missing from the Earl's care, and he

fell into a great rage against his minister. He, however, bestowed his pardon upon him. “ You have your pardon—much good may it do you. I hope you will be more faithful to your next master than you have been to me,” said James. This in some magical way gave Sunderland the power of raising a large sum of money. With this, and a considerable amount of bullion quietly abstracted from the jewel office, he departed to Rotterdam, disguised in woman’s clothes.

Then William came to England, and this juggler with events, this unprincipled servant of many masters, found himself left by every one. He had to the last clung to a ministry which was odious to the new King, he had turned Catholic when it was too late to serve any but an ill purpose for himself, and he had stolen from the public treasury. He was arrested by the Dutch authorities, but soon released ; but when the Act of Indemnity was confirmed, in 1690, he was exempted ; so there was no return to England for him. He and his wife remained at Amsterdam in discomfort and perturbation of mind ; then, thinking their case not so desperate perhaps, they each wrote a submissive letter to William. After much trouble they were given the cold comfort of being allowed to live unmolested in Holland, and Lady Sunderland says pathetically, that all their ambition is bounded to being quietly in Holland for the present, and at Althorp for the rest of their lives.

Whatever had been Sunderland’s supposed hatred for his uncle, Sidney, he wrote beseeching letters to

him for aid and influence, in one of which he desires his help that he may “be quiet at Althorp, and not to be starved.” Later on the Sunderlands went to Utrecht, where Lord Sunderland was frequent in his attendance at the French Protestant church, which was probably one way he took into William’s forgiveness; and upon which Lady Sunderland wrote a very devout letter to Evelyn, filled with praises to Almighty God.

In 1691 they had their reward in that they were then allowed to return to England to kiss the King’s hand; and soon after Sunderland was thoroughly in favour. He was freed from his liability for the eight thousand ounces of bullion he had “borrowed” from the Treasury, and he even had the honour of entertaining the King at Althorp for several days.

But as long as Sunderland lived he would be a political intriguer, and he became so distrusted by every one that he was obliged to spend the last two or three years of his life in retirement at Althorp, where he died in 1702. Lady Sunderland was Lady of the Bedchamber to Anne, as she had been to Mary of Modena, and died at Althorp, at a good age, in 1716. She was a clever, versatile woman, and, as Anne had said when princess, she was a true mate to her husband.

Sunderland is said to have been the introducer, in about 1678, of what Roger North called “a court tune,” a most affected way of speaking in which the vowel sounds were lengthened thus: “Whaat, my laard, if His Maajesty taarns out faarty of us, may he not haave faarty others to saarve him as well, and

whaat maatters who saarves His Maajesty so long as His Maajesty is saarved ? ” It was this affectation which Titus Oates adopted, with his “ Aie, Taitus Oaates,” etc. And that put the silly trick out of fashion.

PART II
SIMON VERELST

VERELST

“ When famed Verelst this little wonder drew,
Flora vouchsaf’d the growing work to view ;
Finding the painter’s science at a stand,
The goddess snatch’d the pencil from his hand,
And finishing the piece, she smiling said,
‘ Behold one work of mine that ne’er shall fade.’ ”

Prior.

CHAPTER XIV

LOUISE RENÉE DE KÉROUALLE, DUCHESS OF PORTSMOUTH

“I am of opinion that in King Charles’s latter times there was as much of laziness as of love, in all those hours he passed among his mistresses ; who, after all, only served to fill up his seraglio, while a bewitching kind of pleasure called sauntering and talking without restraint was the true Sultana queen he delighted in.”

Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham.

“Woe be to the Duchess of Portsmouth now that the ladies are got into council.”—*Lady Dorothy Sunderland.*

CHARLES II’s gallery of fair women included a specimen of every sort, from the dark Bellona-like Duchess of Cleveland, with her coarse mind and fiery temper, to the light-hearted, sincere, and vulgar-tongued Nell Gwyn. Lucy Walters had long gone to the bad ; the dainty, cautious Frances Stuart had been married, and as wife and widow had been kinder to her King than when a maid ; Moll Davies had also been married off, and various other light dames had come and gone. Charles was somewhat at a loose end, for there was no one to arouse a grand passion in his vacant mind. Thus he was ready to be caught by any fresh face, and his sister Henrietta, Duchess of Orleans, unconsciously provided him with what he wanted.

It was necessary to the plans of Louis that England should not only be friendly to France, but that there

should be an alliance signed by which active help should be given to Louis's foreign policy, particularly to his plans against the Dutch. Thus Henrietta was sent to England to negotiate the first treaty of Dover ; and for diplomacy's sake the meeting was given the air of a quasi-accidental affair, brought about by impulsive affection. To cover it Louis, with a retinue of 30,000 soldiers, marched gravely to view his new Flanders provinces, taking with him in his coach his wife, Madame de Montespan and Henrietta, the journey being regarded as a kind of triumphal progress all the way.

At Dunkerque Henrietta asserted her determination to fly over to England and see her brother, and embarking with a small company, landed at Dover, where Charles, by secret arrangement, came to meet her. In her train she brought, as maid of honour, a young woman named Louise de Penancoet de Kéroualle, who belonged to an ancient Brittany family. Her father, Guillaume de Penancoet, married Marie de Rieux, and they had three children. However honourable were these children in point of pedigree, it does not appear that the parents were either rich or holding a great position, but their ancestry did at least cause Louise to have the chance of living near Royalty. Calumny or truth, it is impossible to say which, asserted that her parents sent Louise to Henrietta's Court, hoping that Louis would throw her the handkerchief, but he was engaged at the time in making love to the gentle Louise de la Vallière, and the new maid of honour soon found a recipient for her flirtatious glances in the Comte de Sault. However innocent may have been this episode, the girl's fair



LOUISE DE KÉROUALLE, DUCHESS OF PORTSMOUTH, AS FLORA

(*After Verelst*)

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fame was tarnished, and this fact was not forgotten later when a nation had cause to hate her very name. A story was also told that she secretly left the house of an aunt in Paris, and in the dress of a page accompanied the Duke of Beaufort on his expedition to Candia, being away with him for four months. But this was mere scandal, as during those months she was fulfilling her duties at the Court of Henrietta. Her brother, Sebastian, however, went with the Beaufort expedition and died a few days after his return.

When, during the following year, Louise went to Dover with Henrietta she was about twenty-one, possessed of a "baby face, melancholy eyes, and a languid walk." Though there was probably no pre-meditation in choosing the girl to be present at the conference between the brother and sister, there is no doubt that she made a great impression upon Charles, who found a charm in the conversation of this fair and sad young Breton; and who prolonged the conference for ten or twelve days beyond the stated time, that he might see more of her.

Henrietta's husband was of a jealous disposition, effeminate and false; he suspected every one who came in contact with his wife, and he is said even to have suspected her brother's affection for her. It was with great reluctance, and only because of the King's orders, that he consented that she should stay the requisite time, and a month after her return she died. She herself and all the world said she had been poisoned, but at the autopsy this was denied, just as it was after the death of Lady Denham and of Charles II himself.

This event caused a coldness between the English and French Courts, which did not at all suit Louis, who had tried various ways of influencing Charles to his will. At last, remembering the liking the King of England had shown to Louise de Kéroualle, he determined to send her over the Channel to see what she could do in furthering his schemes. Bishop Burnet gives the credit of this suggestion to the Duke of Buckingham, that versatile genius, unparalleled profligate and enemy to his country. He was jealous of the influence with the King of his cousin Barbara, and being ready to do her any injury, he is said to have improved the occasion of Madame's death by telling Charles that the only decent thing he could do would be to take care of some of her servants, and by more or less pointed words indicated those who would need his care the most. He also wrote to the King of France, telling him how impossible it would be for him to keep any ascendancy over Charles unless he had some one in close connection with him who would foster French interests, and suggested that a mistress was likely longest to keep the King's feet in the way they should go. He even went so far as to offer to escort the lady to England, which offer was naturally accepted.

Having some affair to finish in Paris the Duke of Buckingham sent Louise de Kéroualle on to Dieppe with some of his servants, he intending to follow and embark there with her. So much being done, he dismissed the whole matter from his mind, and when he had completed his business he calmly returned home via Calais. The neglected beauty remained at Dieppe for a considerable time, with no escort but strange

servants and no money to pay the heavy expenses incurred. Ralph Montagu, who was then ambassador at Paris, heard of this, and was quick to seize the advantage given him. He sent to England for a yacht, which Charles at once commanded to take sail, and he also sent some of his own servants to wait upon her and to defray all expenses. Once arrived in England, Arlington, then at loggerheads with the Duke of Buckingham, met her and smoothed the rest of the journey. Louise de Kéroualle was a firm friend, and always remained a supporter of Arlington, thus Buckingham, by his own irresponsibility, lost an influence which would have stood him in good stead for the rest of his life.

The sight of the girl with her melancholy eyes so reminded Charles of his well-beloved sister that he wept and fell into a sentimental mood, naming her maid of honour to his wife on the spot. Almost immediately the relations between France and England grew less strained. This must have been in the summer of 1670, for Evelyn writes in the autumn of having seen "that famous beauty, but in my opinion of a childish, simple, and baby face, Mademoiselle de Kéroualle, lately maid of honour to Madame, and now to be so to the Queen."

At first Louise was coy, whether it was coquetry, or a deep design to make her position as tenable as possible one cannot say, but for some months she occupied herself with her duties, and in preserving an attitude of aloofness towards the monarch, whose amorous inclinations would by that means become the more accentuated. She had to learn something of the nature of the people among whom she was to

live and especially of that of her great rival Lady Castlemaine, never dreaming that though she might triumph over her, there was another humbler courtesan whom she could not conquer.

Castlemaine herself felt that at last her real hold over the King had slipped, and she was rather intent upon saving as much as possible from the wreck than upon fighting the French girl. This may have been the time when Gramont tells us he acted as mediator between her and the King, possibly on one of the long visits to England which he occasionally made after his marriage, but he does not mention Louise, and the Countess became the Duchess of Cleveland early in August, 1670. It was therefore possible that this honour had been asked before the arrival of Mademoiselle de Kéroualle. The success of the demand was at once followed by a further exaction, and Charles made Barbara's eldest son the Marquis of Southampton, and the second Earl of Northumberland, Joscelyn Percy, the last of his line, having died.

As far as can be judged, Louise was anxious that Charles should be off with the old love before he was on with the new, and so encouraged and then repulsed him that he must have wondered whether another Frances Stuart had arisen to torment him. The influence of Barbara had waned to such an extent that in 1668 she had practically retired from Whitehall, and though her name was still on the list of bed-chamber women she scarcely ever attended the Queen, and in 1672, owing to the operation of the Test Act, her name was removed. But before this happened Louise de Kéroualle had come to be publicly owned by the King.

Through her first winter in England she had never ceased in her endeavour to prove herself better looking, better dressed, and more desirable than all those in England who might rival her. Her behaviour was one long attempt to fascinate Charles, and she was so reluctant to grant him any favour that the French ambassador, the French King, and even the French Court were thrown into fits of despondency, for fear that her mission to England should be a failure. This depression was shared by those great Englishmen who feared lest the bribes and pensions doled out by Louis should be discontinued, so at last Arlington and Sunderland determined to make a brave attempt to put things right.

Charles was settling his Court at Newmarket for a short time, and the Arlingtons went down to their seat at Euston, which was within an easy ride of the town of races. Lady Arlington prayed the King as a favour to allow her to invite Mademoiselle de Kéroualle to stay with her, and he did not hesitate in giving his consent. Colbert, the French ambassador, was not only one of the guests, but in the conspiracy, and good honest Evelyn was also there. He describes the house as a noble pile, consisting of the large body of a house and four pavilions or wings added to it, "not only very capable and roomsome, but very magnificent and commodious, as well within as without."

It had a wonderful staircase, a great hall, rooms of state painted in fresco by Verrio, so beloved of the Stuarts. There were parks and gardens, orangery and fountain, but what pleased Evelyn best was his own pretty apartment, to which he could retire out of

the hurry and gaiety and “converse with books.” During the fortnight which Evelyn stayed there, the King came every other day with the Duke, the latter generally returning the same day to Newmarket, while Charles rested the night, Evelyn twice having the honour of dining with his sovereign. Thus, though he was in the house, he did not see all that happened in it, but he saw some things and heard others. For instance, he saw that the beautiful Louise remained nearly all day in her undress and that on the King’s part “there was fondness and toying with that young wanton,” and he heard rumours of a marriage ceremony, though he was not present at its performance.

The fact was that every one was anxious to bind Charles in the toils of the Frenchwoman, and no one was more anxious than Charles himself or than Louise de Kéroualle ; the only question being whether the psychological moment had arrived at which the lady could succumb with the greatest advantage to herself and her cause. She probably decided that it had, but knowing Charles’s weak character she was determined to turn her submission into a conquest by making the compact as binding as it could be upon Charles. To this end she repudiated the idea of being simply a “mistress”: she would be his wife. Had not some ecclesiastics, Bishop Burnet among them, decided that as every man was allowed one wife, a king, and particularly this King, might have two, especially as the wife he had brought him no children? “I see nothing so strong against polygamy as to balance the great and visible imminent hazards that hang over so many thousands, if it be not allowed,” said Burnet in

a treatise on the subject. She therefore demanded to be properly married, and the marriage took place, though whether there was a clergyman present is not recorded.

In the *Secret History of the Reigns of Charles II and James II* the event is thus described : “ But he was more kind to the Duchess of Portsmouth than to any of his mistresses ; and thence it was that . . . after he had made her a Duchess, he made her also his wife ; that is to say, he married her by virtue of his Royal Prerogative at the Lord A’s house, by the Common Prayer Book, according to the ceremonies of the Church of England : a thing in some measure justifiable in a prince, since the Law allows all men one wife ; and therefore a king, who is above Law, may surely have two.”

There had been much love-making to lead up to this. The King spent several hours every day with Mlle. Kéroualle, and invited the whole house party over to Newmarket to see the races. M. Colbert, the French ambassador, who was present, tells how charmingly they were entertained and how upon the young lady were showered those small attentions which denote a great passion, and that she had not failed in showing the gratitude which the love of a great King should deserve from a young girl.

There remains no actual description of this marriage, save that it was contrived by the great ladies of the party, Lady Arlington and Lady Sunderland, and that it was attended with all the customs which were usual in those times and which to-day we should regard as indecencies. Evelyn can only repeat the gossip, having witnessed nothing of the event. He

mentions that it was universally reported that the fair lady succumbed “one of these nights, and the stocking flung, after the manner of a married bride . . . nay, it was said I was at the ceremony ; but it is utterly false ; I neither saw nor heard of any such thing while I was there, though I had been in her chamber, and all over that apartment late enough, and was myself observing all passages with much curiosity. However, it was with confidence believed she was first made *a Miss*, as they call these unhappy creatures, with solemnity at this time.”

All the kingdom talked about the event, which gave the signal for the pamphleteers to get to work, and their descriptions of that fortnight at Euston were of such an indecent character—whether written by Puritan or Royalist—that they are unrepeatable. That it pleased Louise to pretend that she considered herself really married was obvious to all, and it is recorded that on one occasion she took fire at the suggestion that it was not so.

Louis XIV was at last satisfied ; he sent his congratulations to the lady, and formulated the advantages which should accrue from the union—an alliance between England and France against Holland, open profession on the part of Charles of the Roman Catholic faith, and the right of himself to choose a second wife for James, Duke of York. He was pleased in one respect, for war was declared against the Dutch in March, 1672, but Louise was too cautious to press the conversion of the King until she was sure of success, and as for the third desired result there were many motives at work causing some friction before the matter was settled.

At the end of July, 1672, Louise bore the King a son, who was named Charles Lennox, and later given the title of Duke of Richmond, and from that time on her desire to be queen was apparent to every one, for according to the despatches sent from the ambassador to Louis, and given to us in book form by Monsieur H. Forneron, she did not know how to behave in her “good fortune” and had got it into her head that she might still become Queen of England, and was always talking of the Queen’s maladies as though they were mortal. Charles on his part loved her well, but he went his own way nevertheless, gossip having it that he spent £7000 on Lady Falmouth from May to December of 1673, and £40,000 on the Duchess of Cleveland.

But we must remember that the very interesting letters sent to Louis by his emissaries in England were composed of as much gossip as was the diary of Pepys, and can by no means be taken as true records of facts. Though Barbara was at this time not regarded as in close connection with the King, she was doing her utmost to build up a fortune for herself—it would have been quite as easy to hold water in a sieve—and to provide for her children; thus, though she had a whole posse of lovers, she did not let Charles forget her, her rôle being gaiety and laughter, with an occasional row to dispel monotony. Louise, on the other hand, found tears most useful when she wished to cajole a lover or discredit her rival, and Dryden tells us in his “Essay on Satire” :

“ In loyal libels we have often told him
How one has jilted, and the other sold him;
How that affects to laugh, how this to weep.”

In return for this and a few other remarks Dryden found awaiting him in Covent Garden one night three stout ruffians, who used their cudgels upon him with severe effect, and were very careful to run away and hide as soon as they heard some one coming ; for which assault Louise had all the credit.

As to the marriage of the Duke of York, King Louis had decided that the widow of the Duc de Guise would serve him best as Duchess of York, but James had a prejudice against that lady, who was well advanced in years and plain of face. Louise wanted him to marry one of two sisters, daughters of the Duc d'Elbœuf, and she hung their portraits about her room, hoping James would be attracted. He, however, declared them to be too young : they were somewhere between eleven and fourteen. The French ambassador was annoyed with her behaviour and influenced Arlington against her, who hotly reproached her with having forgotten the obligations she was under to him as easily as she forgot the dinners she ate. As James had made up his mind to have some sort of choice in his own marriage, neither Louis nor Louise succeeded in their schemes, and the two pretty sisters were immured in a convent.

The people of England had a profound distrust of France and her King, and from the first they hated the Frenchwoman who was acquiring such a strong influence at Court, yet she contrived always to strengthen her position, and was naturalized as an Englishwoman at the request of Louis. Following this, in August, 1673, Charles created her Baroness Petersfield, Countess of Farnham, and Duchess of Pendennis. The last title was immediately altered

for unknown reasons to Duchess of Portsmouth. Last of all, before the year was out she was made Lady of the Bedchamber to the Queen. Poor Queen ! she must have been fairly well hardened to having people of that sort about her.

Apropos of Louise's new title, Sir William Dugdale mentions that "she was of such honourable women as His Majesty *has deservedly raised to high titles of honour*" ; just as he said Barbara was made Duchess of Cleveland "by reason of her father's death in His Majesty's army, *as also for her own personal virtues.*" He also remarked of Lee, Earl of Lichfield, that some without service had been "advanced to eminent titles . . . as an encouragement to them all *in virtuous endeavours.*" The gentleman had married one of Barbara's daughters !

As Charles had done so much for the French girl, he seemed to think it was Louis' turn to give her something, so in 1674, when the lady was ill and required a quiet life, Charles thought to cheer her by asking his brother of France to bestow upon her the fief of Aubigny, which had reverted to the French King on the death of Richmond, the husband of La Belle Stuart. When one considers it, it was not an extravagant petition, for Louise was working for her own monarch's schemes and he owed her some recompense. Charles, however, added to his request the condition that the fief should descend in succession to such natural son of his and the Duchess of Portsmouth as he might designate. The difficulty about the whole thing was that the title of Duchess of Aubigny carried with it the privilege of a *tabouret* at the French Court, one of the most desired honours

among French women, giving as it did to its owner the permission to remain seated in the King's or Queen's presence. Louis could not easily put up with this, for quite apart from her English rank and questionable position, she had been distinctly a person of no social importance in her own country, so he conferred the estate but withheld the title, and it is said that Louise thought Buckingham responsible for this failure and worked against him ever after.

Lady Portsmouth was living just the life that would gain her enemies, and among them was one whom she scorned too much to notice at the beginning, but whom she found to be impervious to spite or disdain, and this was Nell Gwyn, a woman who was full of kindness, laughter, and wit, but who was too untutored and too uneducated to be anything but vulgar. Her gay heart kept Charles's affection, and though she never received honours or vast estates, she had enough money from him to live in luxury and to compete in all external ways with the two better-born dames. She did not dismay Charles with her temper, nor trouble him with politics, and she was more faithful than any, for even of Louise scandal had its story to tell, connecting her name with that of the Grand Prior of France, brother to the Duke of Vendôme. This man is said to have had a real passion for the Duchess, difficult as it is to believe that any of them could feel real emotion or sentiment ; and he refused to take any hints or to obey any commands to absent himself from Louise's apartments. At last it is said that Charles definitely commanded him to quit, not only the house, but England itself, and means were taken to land the French gentleman

on his own shores. Then, as though defiantly to prove his right, Charles was seen caressing the lady publicly.

But of Nell no such story was ever told ; she openly said that since the King had shown her affection she had been true to him. Her great generosity and the knowledge that she sprang from the people made her a popular figure, while Louise was hated more bitterly with every year that passed. Various stories were told of Nell Gwyn's birth, some trying to prove that she belonged to a respectable middle-class family, and being stage-struck, sold oranges as a means of getting her foot upon the dramatic ladder. But the fact seems to be that she was born in a garret or a cellar, it is immaterial which, in some yard in the lowest part of the city. What sort of life surrounded her childhood it is easy to imagine ; as a young girl she sold oranges about and in the theatre, where her nimble tongue and pretty face soon made her a welcome visitor. Lacy the comedian was said to be her first lover ; he was succeeded by Charles Hart, the great-nephew of Shakespeare, and one of the temporary gallants of Barbara Palmer. Charles, Lord Buckhurst, afterwards Lord Dorset, kept house with her at Epsom, and later she attracted the King's attention. He was, she said, her Charles III, even though he was Charles II to his people. The story goes that she was reciting a prologue to the audience in a hat as large as a cart-wheel, as a method of burlesquing another actress, and her little figure hidden in so absurd a way amused Charles so much that he invited her to sup with him. When she first came to Charles we are told she asked £500 a year, which was refused, but later, after she had become the mother of a son, tens of thousands

were bestowed upon her, with a house in St. James's and the power of commanding any luxury she desired. The fact about her which seems most to have impressed popular fancy is that the walls and ceiling of one of her rooms were covered with mirrors, and there is that story which, true or not, will always be linked with her name. “Come hither, you little bastard, and speak to your father,” she cried to her boy one day. “Nay, Nelly, do not give the child such a name,” remonstrated Charles. To which she answered, “Your Majesty has given me no other name by which I may call him.” It is said that upon this Charles gave him the name of Beauclerc, and made him Earl of Burford; but as a matter of fact he was created Baron Heddington and Earl of Burford the very year he was born.

Nell had a lodging at Whitehall as one of the ladies of the Queen’s privy chamber, a post to which she had never aspired, but which was given her as a means of keeping her near the King; but we never hear that she obtruded in the Queen’s presence or made herself anything but amiable, excepting to her rivals, and to them her plain outspokenness was a sore punishment. Madame de Sévigné, who kept an interested eye upon social life in England, gave a refreshing account in a letter of Nell’s pretty way with Lady Portsmouth, a way which must have much exasperated that lady. She wrote :

“Kéroualle has been mistaken in nothing. She desired to be the King’s mistress; she has that position; he shares her couch in the eyes of all his Court. She has a son who has just been recognized, and on whom has been conferred two duchies. She amasses

riches and makes herself liked and respected by those whom she desires, but she did not foresee that she would find in her way a young comedian, by whom the King is fascinated. She has not the power to detach him from her for an instant. He divides his thoughts, his time, and his wealth between the two. The comedian is as proud as the Duchess of Portsmouth ; she defies her, makes grimaces at her, attacks her, and often steals the King from her, boasting of his preference. She is young, pretty, impudent, debauched, and pleasant ; she sings, she dances, and follows love frankly ; she has a son whom she wishes to be recognized. This is how she reasons. ‘That young woman,’ says she, ‘is a person of quality. She says that all the great people of France are related to her. If some one of rank dies she puts on mourning. Ah, well ! since she is of such high quality, why is she of bad character ? She ought to die with shame. As for me, it is my trade ; I pride myself on nothing else. The King keeps me, I am faithful to him ; my son is his ; I contend that he ought to be recognized and he will recognize him, for he loves me as much as Portsmouth.’” To this Madame Sévigné adds : “This creature takes the upper hand, and disconcerts and embarrasses the Duchess to an extraordinary degree.”

Even at this distance of time one comprehends sympathetically the liking for the open-hearted, straight Englishwoman, and the prejudice against the crafty Frenchwoman who had come into the country to make its King betray its best interests, and who while doing so was diverting into her own pockets money raised by taxes from the community.

Nell Gwyn is credited with initiating the building of the Chelsea Hospital, and of urging forward its completion. The story runs that one day, when driving in her luxurious coach, a poor man asked for charity, saying that he was an old soldier, had fought for the Stuarts through the Civil War, and that wounded, old, and disabled he was starving in the streets. This so affected Nell that she went to the King hot with the pathetic incident, and thus the idea of the hospital arose. There is that other story of Nell in her coach which is not quite so pleasant to tell, though its humour causes it to live. She drove through low quarters, and the people, believing her to be the Duchess of Portsmouth, surrounded her with angry shouts. Coaches were closed-up vehicles in those days, for the glass carriage had not taken among English ladies; so Nell, hearing the cries, opened her door wide and, standing on the step, called, "Never mind, good people, I am the English mistress!" Her charming smile and her frankness would alone have won the mob, but she was their Nell as well as the King's, and they shouted now with delight.

Nell had been a thorn in the side of Lady Castlemaine, and she gaily sought to fill the same office with Louise de Kéroualle, sometimes trying to influence the King by her common sense in a direct way not always possible to Louise. On one occasion he went to her apartments depressed and angry from some contention with his councillors, asking what he could do to please the people. "I am torn by their clamours."

"There is one way left to you, and that I fear you will not take," answered the ready Nell; "send

your mistresses packing, and attend to your business." Needless to say Charles did not take this advice.

Apart from the constant irritation produced by so open a rival as Nell, the Duchess of Portsmouth had other trials which did not tend to her happiness. She was bent on making Charles own to being a Roman Catholic, with the result that after working to this end for nearly fifteen years she succeeded only partially when he was on his death-bed. In 1674 the whole secret league between Charles and Louis was nearly broken through a furore of hatred against the French among the English people, who had expended themselves against Popery by forcing on the resignation of the Duke of York and the Treasurer Clifford; then Lady Portsmouth fell ill and had to leave her Royal master to the seductions of any pretty woman in his proximity. Charles was thoughtful for her in this illness, placing her under his own physician at Windsor, and arranging that her sister, to whom he gave a pension of £600 a year, should come to her. This girl was married soon to the Earl of Pembroke, an even more morally disagreeable companion than the King.

It must have been rather embarrassing for Charles to be constantly confronted with a new son, whose mother eagerly demanded this or that title with which to decorate the nameless infant. His people watched his troubles on this account, some with stern disapproval, some with quiet amusement, and some with open derision. There is more than one incident on record when popular feeling was demonstrated in action, such as when, in November, 1675, the Duchess of Portsmouth being ill, a pillion was fastened on the back of the horse bearing the statue of Charles in

Stocks Market, while a placard was pasted on the breast with the legend, “Haste, post haste, for a midwife.” The Stocks Market occupied the position now held by the Mansion House. Up to the time of Edward I the stocks had stood there, but in Charles II’s reign it was a fruit and flower market, with rows of trees on the east side, “very pleasant to the inhabitants.” A great equestrian statue had been put there in May, 1672, a statue of John Sobieski, the Polish King, which had been purchased by Sir Robert Viner, alderman, who had it decapitated and a head of Charles attached, while the Turk beneath the horse’s feet became a defeated Cromwellian.

But to return to these infants. There was Barbara with her three boys demanding more than one title apiece : the second son, who was already Earl of Euston, was to be made the Duke of Grafton ; Charles, the eldest son, known then as the Earl of Southampton, was to be created Baron of Newbury, Earl of Chichester, and Duke of Southampton ; the third son had already three titles. The Duchess of Portsmouth having secured the lands in France which had belonged to Frances Stuart’s husband, now wanted his title for her son, and Nell was hinting that her boy had not a sufficiency of handles to his name. The last was put off without a title, but with an income of £4000. The titles of Grafton and Richmond and Southampton were conferred all at once, which caused a race for precedence between the two mothers. This precedence depended upon which patent was first signed by the Lord Treasurer, and Louise, learning that that functionary was going to Bath the next day, sent her attorney to the Treasurer at midnight

and secured his signature. When Barbara's lawyer arrived the next morning it was only to learn that the great man had started on his journey. Louise was further gratified by the King's bestowing upon her an annuity of £10,000, which was to be paid out of the wine licences. But at the end of 1675 she had to face the arrival of the notorious Hortense, Duchess Mazarin, who was known as the most beautiful woman in Europe and who was famed for the eccentricity of her life.

When in exile Charles had asked Hortense in marriage of Mazarin, but the great Cardinal was too short-sighted to see coming events, and refused the honour for his niece. In the first year of Charles's reign it was the uncle who offered his niece in marriage to the King, which offer was refused, as was the first. Almost at once Hortense married the Duke of Mayenne on condition that he should take the name of Mazarin. He developed into a religious enthusiast, and made his wife's life a burden by awaking her at night to listen to inaudible "voices" and see invisible "visions," dragging her about the country from one estate to another and torturing her with his jealousy. He was such a misguided bigot that he refused to let the women on his estates milk cows for fear of raising evil thoughts, and he wanted to pull out the front teeth of his little girls that he might destroy all chance of vanity. At last, after there were four children of the union, he thought fit to immure his beautiful young wife in a convent, which was a sort of glorified Magdalene home, and from which the Duchess escaped as soon as possible. She instituted a suit against her husband for a legal separation, and then,

fearing that it would not be successful, left Paris in the dress of a cavalier, attended by her maid, also in man's clothing, and by two gallants. Madame de Sévigné says that she returned to Paris and was again confined, this time in the abbey of Lys, but that the King who had been her playmate in childhood sent a constable with eight dragoons to break down the door and set her at liberty. Hortense then spent three years in Savoy with another gallant, afterwards coming to England, glowing with health and beauty, where she was received with open arms by all those who longed to see the Duchess of Portsmouth discomfited. Charles, at once attracted by her vitality and her magnificent appearance, gave her apartments in St. James's Palace and a pension of £4000 a year.

Louise was expecting another child, and both was and looked ill, for she was one of those whose beauty is killed by anxiety. Nell Gwyn wickedly put on deep mourning for the poor Duchess and her dead hopes, Lady Castlemaine went into the country, and in rage and despair Louise hastened to Bath, the new resort, hoping to regain her good looks.

On her return she found that she had lost Charles ; he was kind and friendly, but they only met when other people were present. For a time she brooded and wept ; then, acting on the advice of the French ambassador, who knew that her failure with Charles would ruin his master's plans, she dried her eyes, appeared again in public, played the gracious hostess, and mixed with the Court. But before 1677 dawned her power seemed to have vanished entirely. Nell Gwyn, who never really lost her hold on the King, was still in his favour and still made the Duchess of

Portsmouth the target for her raillery. Charles visited the Duchess Mazarin daily. He is said to have regularly allowed himself to be put to bed at White-hall, and as soon as his gentlemen and valets departed to have got up, dressed, and stolen off to St. James's Palace, to spend some hours with the high-spirited Frenchwoman ; but he went to see the Duchess of Portsmouth only when he knew that other people would be there. It may have been in some vain attempt to regain her influence that Louise went demurely to service in the King's chapel, and pretended to turn Protestant ; but this had no effect on Charles and did not deceive any one else.

Monsieur Forneron gives us many stories which he gathered from the letters sent by Courtin, the ambassador, to Louis XIV, showing how keen was the interest taken in France in the scandalous doings at the English Court. One tells us how a reconciliation was effected among the various ladies. Courtin was paying a call upon the Duchess Mazarin when Louise de Kéroualle entered on a visit of ceremony, and almost immediately came Lady Harvey, sister to Ralph Montagu, who hated Louise "worse than any other woman in England." She brought with her Nell Gwyn, who wished to thank Hortense for her polite compliments on the recognition of her son. And these three sworn enemies met, talked with amusing gaiety, and showed every civility to each other ; but when Louise had gone Nelly asked the ambassador why King Louis did not send her presents instead of the Duchess of Portsmouth, as she served the King of England far the better of the two, and he loved her far more than he did her rival.

On another occasion Courtin was seated at the theatre near Madame Harvey and Mrs. Middleton, and they told him laughingly that they should come to supper with him one evening and each bring a friend. He expressed his pleasure and the matter was arranged. The next day Mrs. Middleton invited Louise, and Lady Harvey, who was for the moment enamoured with Madame Mazarin, invited her. To these was added a Mrs. Beauclerc. It was a curious meeting. Mrs. Beauclerc had once been very intimate with Lady Harvey, but now hated her; Lady Harvey hated the Duchess of Portsmouth, and the friendship between the latter and the Duchess Mazarin was of the iciest. Yet the ambassador was clever enough to keep them all amused and gay, and after supper he openly shut up together two or three times the two worse enemies, telling them to get reconciled. At the end Madame Mazarin and Madame Portsmouth came out hand in hand, dancing and jumping down the stairs.

This reconciliation seems not to have been just a thing of the moment, for it lasted, and the Court circle was astonished one day at seeing the Duchess Mazarin in the coach of the Duchess of Portsmouth. Evidently the latter was tired of the struggle; time and pertinacity had worn down her resentment against Nell Gwyn, and now she accepted Hortense as an indisputable fact, and was determined to make the best of it.

As for the international politics which had been the cause of Louise de Kéroualle's coming to England, they had resolved themselves into something like a duel of wits between Louis and William of Orange;

Charles was bound to Louis, but the people of England were ready to spend their last penny in upholding William, and the Protestant prince had been working quietly among the great heads of European affairs to form a coalition against France. His last *coup* was to come to England and beg the hand of Mary, the King's niece, in marriage. Charles raged in private, but the people shouted with delight in the streets. Charles, James, Louise, and Barillon, the new French ambassador, were all powerless : their resistance would have been useless against a man who had suddenly taken the tide of enthusiasm at the flood. The marriage took place, and every one, excepting perhaps Princess Mary, behaved as though it were the most fortunate thing in the world.

The way in which Louise regained her ascendancy over Charles is told with amusing reticence by M. Forneron. As soon as the marriage ceremony was over and the newly wedded couple had left England Louise was taken seriously ill ; no one quite knew what was the matter, but she took to her bed, and every one believed that her life was in danger. Charles, always touched by the suffering of his womenkind, came constantly to see her and gave audience to Barillon in her room ; but Louise grew worse and worse, and in a faint voice with crucifix in hand would beg the King to forsake his mistresses for his soul's good. Truly at one moment she seemed at the last extremity, yet three or four days later, feeling a little better, she dragged herself out of bed, had herself properly dressed, and went to the theatre, where the King was witnessing a play acted by a company of French actors, and sitting as close as he possibly could

to Madame Mazarin. It must have been rather a shock when his dear, white-faced, thin-cheeked Louise settled herself on the other side of him at the very moment in which he was probably wondering whether she was alive or dead.

The fact was that through some means Louise had become thoroughly frightened ; she had been forced to realize that it was not only her countrywoman she had to fear, but several Englishwomen who were poaching on her preserves. Mrs. Middleton was throwing her daughter in the King's path ; Carey Fraser, a new beauty, and the daughter of the King's physician—with other Court ladies—was in the already noted song mentioned as an aspirant for Louise's post ; and Sidonie de Courcelles, an old friend of Hortense, came too often to England and to the English Court. The sudden conviction was too much for Louise, she left her bed of slow death, grew well, and determined to play the game out to the end. This heroic resolve was followed by a combination on the part of the two Duchesses to keep off new and untried aspirants for Royal favour, and there was for a time a little peace in the domestic surroundings of Charles.

Though the Duchess of Portsmouth now held a shared position she gradually secured the larger share, and to the end of the King's life was regarded as the one woman to be reckoned with about Charles. No one else, certainly not the Queen, had at Whitehall such splendid apartments, furnished with such extravagant luxury. Evelyn goes so far as to say that they contained ten times the richness and glory of poor Catherine's. This must have been partly

Catherine's fault in not demanding more than she did, for Charles was more ready to give than to refuse gifts ; it was also partly due to the fact that Charles knew that his wife was a fixture, while Louise could run away if he offended her ; and as she drew from him a more lasting affection than had any other woman he lavished the most absurdly costly articles upon her. Two or three times he had the rooms pulled down and rebuilt and the whole furniture renewed to satisfy her demands. When Evelyn followed the King one morning, not only into the Duchess of Portsmouth's bedroom, but through it into her dressing-room beyond, "where she was in her morning loose garment, her maids combing her, newly out of her bed, His Majesty and the gallants standing about her," he saw a wonderful collection of tapestry, "for design, tenderness of work, and incomparable imitations of the best paintings beyond anything I had ever beheld." There were also Japanese cabinets, screens, pendule clocks, great vases of wrought plate, tables, stands, chimney furniture, sconces, branches, braseras, all of massive silver, *besides some of Her Majesty's best paintings.* There is still shown at Windsor Castle a heavy table of silver which once belonged to Charles II. Who knows that its actual owner was not Louise de Kéroualle ?

The parents of Louise were not so shocked at her position as some parents would be, for they visited England in 1675, going to stay, not with either of their daughters, but with Sir Richard Browne, who had lived at Brest before the Restoration, guarding Charles's interest over sea affairs. This was near the home of the Kéroualles, and that family had shown

Sir Richard much kindness, which he returned by inviting them to England. He took them to see Evelyn, who said of the father that he was a soldierly person and a good fellow, as the Bretons generally are ; of the lady he pronounced that she had been very handsome and seemed a shrewd understanding woman ; and they all appear to have had a discussion upon that ever fertile subject between those of different nations, language, Evelyn finding that several words of the Breton language were the same as those in the Welsh. From Forneron we learn that they held the title of Count and Countess, and it was said that they derived no profit from the situation or the wealth of either of their daughters.

Of all the women who amassed money from the irregularity of their lives there was none who equalled Louise ; she was absolutely insatiable. She managed to increase her pension from an annual £12,000 to £40,000, and in one year drew no less, by different methods, from the Treasury than £136,668. She trafficked in convicts, selling Royal pardons to those who were rich, and selling the poor men to West India planters, and had many other secret ways of getting money. It was said that she invested it in France, having always in her mind that it would one day probably be necessary for her to fly there for safety, but her subsequent history scarcely bears this out. She certainly spent money lavishly on clothes and entertaining, while she simply threw it away at the gaming-table.

One example of the way in which she entertained is given us by Evelyn, who received an invitation to dine in what he called “ her glorious apartments at

Whitehall" on the evening that the Morocco ambassador and his train were being entertained there. It is worthy of note that it was the Duchess of Portsmouth and not the Queen who asked the foreign visitors to dinner. The thing which really surprised Mr. Evelyn was the extraordinary moderation and modesty with which the guests behaved. They were all placed about a long table, a lady between two Moors, amongst them being the King's natural daughters, Lady Lichfield and Lady Sussex ; as well as Lady Portsmouth—"Nelly, etc., concubines and cattle of that sort, as splendid as jewels and excess of bravery could make them ; the Moors neither admiring nor seeming to regard anything, furniture or the like, with any earnestness, and but decently touching the banquet." At the end they gravely took leave, hoping that God would bless the Duchess of Portsmouth and the Prince, meaning the little Duke of Richmond.

During the remarkable Titus Oates conspiracy it is not to be wondered at that Louise was frightened to distraction. All Catholics, even the Queen, were in danger. Titus Oates accused Her Majesty of conspiring to murder Charles, and the House of Commons passed a resolution asking the peers to join them in an address to the King for the removal of the Queen and all papists from his person. The Duchess of Portsmouth had been brought up in a better school than had Barbara Palmer, for she had always been respectful to Catherine, who now turned to her for support in events which terrified them both. Louise thought of retiring to France, an idea which was strengthened when the Parliament demanded the

removal of herself and Lord Sunderland, proposing to execute them both with other Catholics.

The Duke of York left England, and Louise felt that she stood utterly alone, for she knew Charles well enough to believe that he would leave her to her fate to save his head, his throne, or even his pocket. However, she waited upon events and things quieted down so that there seemed a breathing space, and Charles turned to her for help in putting himself right with Louis, who was incensed at the marriage of Mary with William of Orange, and who considered that he was paying his money into England without getting proper support in return.

In 1680 Louise was attacked in what was known as the Prentices' Plot, by which some apprentices took their oaths before the mayor that there was a plot to take out of the Tower Lords Powis, Stafford, Arundel, and Belasyse and burn them with the Duchess of Portsmouth. England had, in fact, lost its head on the subject of Popery, for James had betrayed his true temper in Scotland, and it was a certain thing that Charles would give no legitimate heir to the succession, therefore people looked forward with dread to the prospect of having James as king, or of being ruled by France.

Thus it was that Lady Portsmouth was blamed for whatever happened. Barillon, the French ambassador, said that James was ready to sacrifice her to the hatred of the people, while she was quite ready to save herself at his expense. All through Lady Sunderland's letters to Henry Sidney we find her speaking of the woman whom she was so glad to befriend ten or fifteen years earlier as "that jade," "that jade such as

never was," "so damned a jade," and betraying a really wonderful hatred of her, and this because Louise was making use of the Earl of Sunderland as a buffer. Always hoping for a cessation of the public ferocity, Louise stayed on and took as her course a warm partisanship of the Prince of Orange. But she went farther than this. When the whole nation was in a ferment over the Exclusion Bill she begged the King to give way and not to ruin himself by not acceding to the desire to exclude the Duke of York from the succession, and she openly declared herself on the side of the Commons, who quickly passed the Bill through its three readings. She was urged to this by the idea that it would be possible to get the King to name her son as his successor, and had already made her plans for effecting a match between him and the King of France's natural daughter, later the Duchess of Bourbon. The curious thing was that the Duke of York did not resent this, because the King told him that her supposed support of the Exclusion party was an arranged thing, so that she might have credit with that party and find out their designs. The Bill was thrown out in the Lords, and the Commons revenged themselves by trying and executing Viscount Stafford, a course which it is said was urged on by Louise. French intrigue in England was at this time of so involved a kind that neither Charles nor any one but the French King and his minister really knew why any one either supported or opposed anything, the fact being that Louis XIV's aim was simply to keep England so occupied with her domestic affairs that she had not opportunity to see what he was doing in Europe. Thus it seemed to be

against Louis's interest that the Exclusion Bill should pass, yet his emissaries supported it; Louise was a Catholic, yet she was ready to aim this blow at her Church; Sunderland, though disgraced for a time for supporting the Bill, was soon restored to power by the compliant King, and every one gaily, though some unconsciously, played the game of France.

From the King downwards, almost all men of consequence were drawing French pensions or presents, though Charles, through his lack of enthusiasm for the Royal intriguer over the Channel, was being kept very short. His physical strength and his will were disappearing under the dissipated sensual life he led, and the only thing he desired was to idle and lounge at ease, and let any who would do the work for him. Yet he seemed to be living in the midst of dissensions and broils, so that for weariness' sake he at last fell into the trap, prorogued his Parliament, accepted a large sum of money with a promise of more from Louis, and settled down to a harmonious existence with the only one of his mistresses who had shown interest in or understanding of current events, and who had assisted him with her counsel, however malevolent that had been for his country. For the first time since the advent of the Duchess Mazarin in England Louise felt a real confidence in her Royal master, and she used this opportunity to visit France, where at long last she was allowed the privilege of the *tabouret*—a somewhat poor privilege, for though the honour conferred the right of remaining seated in the presence of the French Queen, the *tabouret* itself upon which she sat was an uncomfortable stool with neither arms nor back.

Louise was so well received by the King of France that she made a Royal progress through the country. In Paris she was treated with all honour ; one day she went to visit the Capuchin friars, and they turned out in procession with cross, holy water, and incense to receive her, as though she were a saint. The deep respect shown her in her own country actually affected all classes in England, so that when she returned she found—what she had never before been allowed to realize in her adopted country—that she was a person of great importance, and that English people stood in the streets to gaze upon—not, as usual, to curse—Madame “Carwell,” or “Charwell,” as they called her. The Queen became a mere nobody compared with her, and dire punishment fell upon any person who was heard to question her character. Yet Louise was rash enough to play with her position by indulging in her amorous intrigue with the Abbé Vendôme, the Grand Prior of France, making her French allies very uncomfortable and giving Charles some jealous moments. However, he was ordered out of the kingdom, and the King grew more, rather than less devoted to his mistress. So that Louise really thought she saw the hope of her life coming to its fulfilment. She gained from Louis the duchy as well as the estate of Aubigny, with reversion to her son, of whom he wrote as “our very dear and well-beloved cousin, Prince Charles Lennox, Duke of Richmond,” and the boy and his mother were endowed with all the privileges and liberties of French nobility. In matters of State as well as in foreign affairs Louise, not the Queen, was consulted ; Rochester and Godolphin were her satellites ; Barillon accepted her views and

her advice. She was in effect not only Queen but King of England, and she bitterly deplored the fact that the Exclusion Bill had not passed.

Charles at fifty-two was an old man ; he had lived not wisely but too well, and his energies were already dying. It may be that the Duchess hoped to bend him to her will ; if so, she would probably have succeeded, for it was remarked that there was a strangeness and coldness between Charles and his brother James, and that the King talked of sending James to Scotland, upon which his brother answered that there was no need ; and to this the King replied that one must go, either the Duke or himself. The Duke of Monmouth too came to England on a secret visit, and though he saw only Barillon and Louise he went away again, evidently looking forward to pleasant things. Burnet says that something was hatching at the Duchess of Portsmouth's house, though no one knew what ; but it is not hard to guess that the succession was entirely to the front in the French-woman's mind. She was astute enough to see that Charles was nearing the end of his life, and she had amassed and invested in France great sums of money ; but she probably thought it worth while to try for higher game, and was scheming with all the finesse of which she was capable.

Evelyn went to Court on Sunday February 1st, 1685, the day before, it was whispered, the King intended going through the Treasury books, dismissing Rochester—perhaps to the Tower—and making various other reforms. Charles, half asleep, was in his chair toying with Madame Mazarin, Lady Portsmouth, and Lady Cleveland, who was again living in England.

Groups of innumerable wax candles lighted the great hall, in one part of which about twenty people were gathered round the basset-tables, with at least two thousand golden pieces before them. There was a ripple of laughter and talk, with the occasional fall of a coin, while Hortense's French page struck the strings of his lute and sang a French song of love : all was light, colour, and warmth ; not at all the scene which staid gentlemen of respectable habits desired to see on the Sabbath. But it was the last scene of Charles's Court to which private subjects ever had access. The licentious, mad-cap, luxurious, and irresponsible reign was over ; it ended for the world to the chirrup of a love-song, the clinking of gold, and the lazy love-making of a moribund Royal lover to three mistresses at once. Truly a fitting end !

Charles felt out of sorts that night and went to Louise's apartments for a basin of "spoon food." Of this he ate little, went to bed, and passed a sleepless night. When he rose in the morning—he was never a late riser—his physician, who had been ordered to be present, could not understand what he said, and when he stood up he almost immediately staggered and fell in a fit, "like an apoplexy." He was bled over and over again and tortured according to the custom of those times ; a hot warming-pan was applied to his head, and some disgusting essence, distilled from putrid human skulls, was forced into his mouth. In spite of all this he recovered consciousness, but strange to relate, the loss of so much blood did not give him strength and he died on the following Friday.

The Queen was constantly in his room, and her being there naturally dislodged the Duchess of Ports-

mouth, who had been hanging over the King's bed until then. M. Barillon was in Whitehall all day during the Thursday. He retired for some time to the Duchess of Portsmouth's apartments and found her overwhelmed with grief, the physicians having deprived her of all hope. Yet she did not speak of her sorrow. "She led me into a closet and said to me : ' Monsieur Ambassador, I am going to tell you one of the greatest secrets in the world, and if it were known it would deprive me of my head. At the bottom of his heart the King of England is a Catholic ; but he is surrounded with Protestant Bishops, and nobody informs him of his situation or speaks to him of God. I cannot with decency again enter his room ; besides, the Queen is almost always there. The Duke of York is busied with his affairs, and these are too important to allow him to take that care which he ought about the conscience of the King. Go and tell him I have conjured you to advise him to think on what can be done to save the King's soul—he is master of the King's room, and can cause to withdraw whoever he pleases. Lose no time, for if there be the least hesitation it will be too late.' "

Barillon went back to the King's room and whispered to the Duke to go to the Queen's apartment, for she had fainted, and as a consequence had been bled and carried to her own room, which communicated with the King's ante-room. Barillon followed him and there told him what the Duchess had said ; to which James answered : " You are right, there is no time to lose. I will sooner hazard everything than not do my duty on this occasion."

The Duke returned later saying the King refused

to take the sacraments offered him by the Protestant Bishops, who would remain around him. They thought of various ways of clearing the room. Barillon was to pretend to give a private message from Louis of France ; the Queen was to be brought in to take a last farewell ; at length it was decided that James should whisper quietly to his brother and find out his wishes. So the two returned to the King's chamber, and the Duke, forbidding any one to come nigh, stooped and said something in Charles's ears, to which he answered aloud :

“ Yes, with all my heart.”

“ Shall I bring a priest ? ”

“ Do, brother, for God's sake do, and lose no time. But no, you will get into trouble.”

“ If it costs me my life,” said the Duke, “ I will fetch a priest.”

A Benedictine monk, named John Huddleston, who had saved the King's life after the battle of Worcester and thus was a privileged person, was in Whitehall, and he was brought in readiness up that back stair close to the bed-head which had so often opened to admit the votaries of the heathen goddess of love. He was quite ready again to serve his King at the risk of his life, and though too ignorant to know his part in the ceremony, he was quickly tutored. James then commanded all who were in the room to withdraw excepting the Earl of Feversham and the Earl of Bath, upon whom he thought he could rely, and the doors being closed, Huddleston entered. The whole ceremony occupied about three-quarters of an hour, and the King seemed much relieved by what had passed. His natural sons were brought to his bedside : Grafton,

Southampton, and Northumberland, sons of Barbara ; St. Albans, the surviving of Nell Gwyn's two sons ; and Richmond, who could never now be King of England. Monmouth was still in exile, and his name did not pass his father's lips, in spite of the love Charles had shown him. Charles blessed all the young Dukes who surrounded him and spoke with great affection to Richmond ; then turning to James he implored him to see after the Duchess of Richmond and her son. "And do not let poor Nelly starve !" he added. The Queen was still too upset to return to his room, but sent him a message imploring his pardon for any offence she might have committed.

"She asks my pardon, poor woman," said Charles. "I ask hers with all my heart."

In his life Charles had been witty and courteous, and in his death he was the same. When morning dawned he apologized to those who had stood round him all night, saying, "I have been a most unconscionable time dying, but I hope you will excuse me ! "

The popular cry of poison was at once raised, for Charles, in spite of all his faults, was much loved by his people. Bishop Burnet more than half believed the charge to be true and tells a curious story which he heard in November, 1709, from Mr. Henley, of Hampshire, father of the Lord Keeper. This gentleman saw the Duchess of Portsmouth when she was in England in 1699, and she told him that "she was always pressing the King to make both himself and his people easy, and to come to a full agreement with his Parliament, and he was come to a final resolution of sending away his brother and calling a Parlia-

ment, which was to be executed the next day after he fell into that fit of which he died. She was put upon the secret, and spoke of it to no person alive, but to her confessor ; but the confessor she believed told it to some who, seeing what was to follow, took that wicked course to prevent it."

As soon as Charles was dead Louise fled to the house of the French ambassador, and an hour after James was proclaimed he sought her there to assure her of his protection and friendship, for he wished to stand sufficiently well with King Louis as to share in the distribution of French gold. But he removed little Richmond from the post of Grand Equerry, saying that it was too onerous a post for a lad of thirteen to fill.

Louise knew that her reign now was ended, she knew also that she was so much hated in England that when Parliament met it would initiate an attack upon her, so she was anxious to leave England as soon as possible ; but she had been forbidden to do so until she had paid her debts : thus the matter of money alone remained to be settled. She had drawn £10,000 in gold as soon as Charles was dead, she secured from James an estate of £5000, and held an income of £2000 from the confiscated estates of Earl Grey until her son came of age ; besides this, she had her furniture and her jewels and money invested in France. James promised that her rooms at Whitehall should be kept for her use and that he would befriend her and her son. She left England in August, 1685, while still a young woman, with fifty years of life before her.

These fifty years were spent mostly at Aubigny,

incurring debt and getting year after year an order from the King to stop her creditors from seizing her effects. Louis seldom forgot the aid she had given him and was always ready to help her out of a difficulty. That he was called upon very often for his obliging assistance is not to be wondered at when the Duchess's extravagance is considered. In 1714 she went to Paris on a visit, and her sheaf of bills included such unconsidered—and probably unpaid—trifles as £833 for stuff for liveries, and £1860 for furniture and the making of habits. Louise's son, Charles, a true son of Charles II, deserted her as soon as he came into his own income, and went to England. He died in 1723, "the most hideous old rake." Under William III the Duchess's pension was withdrawn, and in 1691 her rooms at Whitehall were burned down. Evelyn speaks of the latter occurrence with his usual frankness. "This night a sudden and terrible fire burnt down all the buildings over the stone gallery at Whitehall to the waterside, beginning at the apartments of the late Duchess of Portsmouth and consuming other lodgings of such lewd creatures, who debauched both King Charles and others, and were his destruction."

A year after she left England Louise came back, and it is said that either Louis had some suspicions about the motive for this journey, or she had been talking too freely of Madame de Maintenon; in any case a *lettre de cachet* was drawn up for her exile, but through the good office of Courtin it was never signed, and from that time Louis continued to be her friend. In later years she often came to England, and once in the palace of George I there was a remarkable meeting of herself, Catherine Sedley, Duchess

of Dorchester, who had given Mary of Modena so much affliction, and Lady Orkney, that Elizabeth Villiers who had ruined the marital happiness of Queen Mary II. The irrepressible and plain-spoken Catherine said in surprise, “Who would have thought we three — should meet here ? ”

In her old age Louise remained at Aubigny, founded a convent of hospital nuns, and decorated churches, dying in 1734 at the age of eighty-five. Her pension of £19,000, which had been granted to her by Charles and sequestered by William, was restored to her son by the British Parliament, and the Duke of Richmond drew this amount until a quarter of a century ago, when it was commuted for a sum of nearly £500,000. Thus did England reward the descendants of the Frenchwoman who dragged her through humiliation in the service of a French King !

PART III

SIR GODFREY KNELLER

SIR GODFREY KNELLER

“ Nature and art in thee alike contend,
Not to oppose each other, but befriend ;
For what thy fancy has with fire design’d,
Is by thy skill both temper’d and refin’d.
As in thy pictures light consents with shade,
And each to other is subservient made,
Judgment and genius so concur in thee,
And both unite in perfect harmony.

But after-days, my Friend ! must do thee right,
And set thy virtues in unenvy’d light.
Fame due to vast desert is kept in store,
Unpaid till the deserver is no more ;
Yet thou in present the best part hath gain’d,
And from the chosen few applause obtain’d :
Ev’n he who best could judge and best could praise,
Has high extoll’d thee in his deathless lays :
Ev’n Dryden has immortalized thy name ;
Let that alone suffice thee, think that fame.”

William Congreve.

CHAPTER XV

CAREY FRASER, COUNTESS OF PETERBOROUGH

“ What god, what genius did the pencil move,
When Kneller painted these ! ”

Pope.

THE Chevalier de Gramont has crystallized in words some characters and descriptions which are likely to last so long as humanity reads books. Through him we know much about people whose very names would have died from memory and history had he not written them in his pages. Had he never told us of Miss Hamilton we should have known no more of her than we do of Miss Pitt ; Mrs. Middleton would have merely been an uninteresting frequenter of the Courts of Mary of Modena and Anne ; Lady Denham’s story would have been told in two lines, and we might even have been deluded by forgetfulness into believing James, Duke of York, an exemplary husband.

Alas ! Gramont knew not England when William III reigned, and he had no successor to give us the lighter side of Court life—perhaps that is why we do not believe that there was any lighter side, why it is so dull to us and sordid with the stale aroma of past banquets, faded flowers, and retribution for sins. What does any one know of Carey Fraser, Isabella

Bennet, or Mary Compton? The identity of Lady Middleton has baffled all but one painstaking biographer, G. S. Steinman. Were they maids of honour or ladies of the bedchamber? Even Miss Strickland is dumb concerning them. She too did not know the names of the women who surrounded Queen Mary, though they must have been in attendance upon Her Majesty, doing their daily work, and living lives which, though they appear to us to have been prosaic and unnoteworthy, may have held as much excitement as the lives of their mothers.

We look into the biography of Lord Peterborough to seek information about his wife, and the first thing we find is the curious fact that she is given two fathers. On one page she is said to be the daughter of Sir Peter Fraser, Bart., of Dotes or Durries, in the shire of Mearns—Kincardine—in Scotland, and that she was a “highly estimable and accomplished lady.” On another page she is given as the daughter of Sir Alexander Fraser, Knt., and was married some time before 1688. Evelyn speaks of having Sir Alexander, prime physician to the King, to dine with him in June, 1666, most certainly the same man. From all that is to be gathered from the many volumes consulted for these memoirs, Carey was the daughter of Dr. Fraser, who wandered from Paris to Holland with the rest of Charles’s homeless followers during the Commonwealth, the doctor of whom Clarendon said, “No doubt he is good at his business, otherwise the maddest fool alive.” After the Restoration Charles knighted his faithful doctor and kept him always about the Court.

The description of the daughter as highly estimable



CAREY FRASER, COUNTESS OF PETERBOROUGH

(*After Kneller*)

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and accomplished is grave and correct in sentiment, though it needs a great deal of embroidering to make it fit the lady, for it scarcely indicates the character of Carey as a girl. In her youth, when maid of honour to Queen Mary of Modena, she was a giddy, extravagant young creature, neither better nor worse than those who shared her position. The first literary mention we have of her is in 1675, in the masque of *Calisto* (written by that fertile but undistinguished dramatist John Crowne), which was acted by the ladies of the Court. The chief characters were taken by Princesses Mary and Anne, Lady Henrietta Wentworth, who fell in love so tragically with the Duke of Monmouth, the Countess of Sussex [Lady Cleveland's daughter], Lady Mary Mordaunt, Sarah Jennings, and Miss Blague. Among the nymphs attending upon Diana we find Carey Fraser's name.

The next year there was every reason to believe that she would have married Sir Carr Scrope, a versifier and man of fashion, who was greatly attracted by her elegance and good looks. One would have thought them a well-matched pair, for both loved dress too well; but one evening, when Carey looked particularly lovely and the matter seemed near being settled, she told him heedlessly that her gown had cost £300. The news paralysed the young man's intentions, fear killed his love, and Carey lost her gallant.

During that period there was no stranger, wilder person among the noble families than young Charles Mordaunt, the eldest son of John Mordaunt and nephew of the Earl of Peterborough. He matriculated at Christ Church, Oxford, in 1674, at the age of sixteen, and the same year entered as a volunteer on

board the *Cambridge*. He was one of the most curious contradictions in his character, graceful and pleasant to look at, imaginative and clever, but with a mind obsessed by tales of blood and deeds of daring, such as we nowadays ascribe to the influence of the penny dreadful.

After his death his widow went through a manuscript autobiography which he had amused himself by writing when he was old and out of public life, and to her horror she found that he had committed three capital crimes before he was twenty. This so shocked her that she threw the book into the fire. It is, however, very probable that most of the Earl's assertions were the result of a vivid imagination.

Charles Mordaunt was a rover by nature, and his love of change showed itself several times over in early life in the usual youthful way, the desire to go to sea. As the annotator of Burnet says, he was "graceful and elegant in his manners and person, and a favourite with the Muses, yet he seemed emulous of mixing only with the rough, and the then untutored, brave tars of the ocean." When he got a little tired of the brave tars young Mordaunt came home, having in the meantime become Viscount Mordaunt through the death of his father.

Then he had a thorough change, posed as a gallant, dressed like a beau, and went to Court, naturally meeting the various maids of honour. He no sooner looked at Carey Fraser than he found that he had discovered the one woman in the world to make him happy, and the two young people were promptly married, though he was barely twenty and she was younger. It is very possible that they derived much

happiness from their union during the first year, though it is fairly certain that they did not set up housekeeping together, and that the world knew nothing of the marriage. In October of 1678 the young husband again obeyed the call of the wild, and volunteered in the *Bristol*, sailing in her for the Mediterranean.

A little later scandal pointed its finger not at Lady Mordaunt, but at Mrs. Carey Fraser, a scandal which was directed towards intention rather than fact. The illness of Louise de Kéroualle, which occurred towards the end of the seventh decade, has already been described. It will be remembered that when she had scarcely turned the corner, she rose from her bed one day, had herself dressed, and went to the play, to which Charles had taken the Duchess Mazarin. The reason given for this extraordinary behaviour is, as has been said, that she had learned that various Court ladies were competing for her place in the King's affections and life, among those mentioned being Carey Fraser. The lampoon of "Cullen with His Flock of Misses" puts her name fairly low down in the list of aspirants; but as the woman last named was said to be the chosen favourite, Carey may thus have been said to stand high in the King's regard. The whole scandal may have been entirely untrue, but it at least gives evidence that, though she was a wife, she was but an unacknowledged one at this time. Her husband was practically out of England until late in 1680, though he came back for short periods. In June of that year we learn from a letter of Lady Dorothy Russell (Sacharissa) that Lord Mordaunt was sent out with the expedition to Tangier, and she adds the informa-

tion that “there are few who doubt the fact of his marriage, and that he already repents and is ashamed of it.”

The expedition being over, Lord Mordaunt settled down in a house at Fulham, presumably with his wife, though she is not mentioned, for their eldest son was born about that time. It was probably this event which forced the erratic but not unkind man to acknowledge his marriage. He also took his seat in the House of Lords and charmed his colleagues with his oratory. On the accession of James, however, he again became a traveller, and plotted towards settling “the business of England” in relation to William of Orange, during whose reign he was high in favour. In 1697 he became Earl of Peterborough by the death of his uncle.

Of his wife scarcely anything more is known. Peterborough’s biographers, when speaking of her, adopt the apologetic tone for her husband : “Domestic life was not his forte. He never had any formal quarrel or estrangement with his wife ; notwithstanding his gallantries, delinquencies, etc., she always watched over his interests. . . . All his references in letters to his family are affectionate, nor does he appear to have had any open quarrel with his wife, of whom for many years he saw but little.”

After taking Barcelona in 1705 Lord Peterborough wrote to Carey : “I can now give you joy upon taking Barcelona, which is effected. I can modestly say such an attempt was never made by such a handful of men. We have taken in three days the Castle of Montjuick, sword in hand, that resisted 30,000 men three months. There were 500 men in it. We marched

with 1000 men thirteen hours, and with scaling ladders took a place upon a rock, much stronger than Portsmouth, and had but 800 men, 200 having lost us in the night. . . . I would rather you should hear of this earlier from others than myself."

However gratifying it may have been to receive letters of this sort, they could scarcely have compensated for a lonely life such as that led domestically by Lady Peterborough.

Peterborough was as inconstant and erratic in love as he was in all other matters; it was true of him that he was "to one thing constant never." He liked to fly over the Continent faster than a travelling courier, and it is said that "he saw more Kings and postillions than any man in Europe." When he captivated Carey Fraser he possessed aquiline and regular features, with blue eyes of an extreme brightness and vivacity which had in them a "peculiar look of devilment." As he grew older he became extremely thin, so that Swift said of him that he was

"A skeleton in outward form,
His meagre corpse, though full of vigour,
Would halt behind him were it bigger."

Pope wrote of him that "nobody could be more wasted, no soul can be more alive."

There were three children born of this marriage, two boys and a girl. His eldest son wished to marry Marlborough's daughter, Lady Mary Churchill, but the Duke refused the alliance because of the dissolute character of the young man. These sons died within two months of each other of smallpox in 1710, when the eldest was thirty. The daughter married the second Duke of Gordon. Their mother did not live

to see her boys pass away, for she died in May, 1709.

Later Peterborough fell in love with Anastasia Robinson, the singer, whom, it might be said, true to his custom, he married secretly and acknowledged only a little while before his death.

CHAPTER XVI

FRANCES WHITMORE, LADY MIDDLETON

“If you truly note her face,
You shall find it hath a grace
Neither wanton, nor o'er serious,
Nor too yielding, nor imperious.”

George Wither.

LADY MIDDLETON has often been confused with Mrs. Middleton, renowned as the first professional beauty that England has ever known, but at the date when *Mrs.* Middleton was encouraging the attentions of three lovers at once, Frances Whitmore, later *Lady* Middleton, was not in existence, for her birth did not take place until October, 1666. She must have been the eldest of Lady Whitmore's three daughters, for Frances Denham did not marry until 1665. It is possible that the Whitmores were staying at the time in Durham, as the baby was baptized in Stockton. Her father and mother were evidently well imbued with the social fashions of the times, for they made a contract of marriage for their daughter before she was nine years old, and it was done with all ceremony under a licence from the Archbishop of Canterbury, the youthful bridegroom being her cousin William Whitmore, son of William Whitmore who possessed a mansion at Barnes, or Balmes, between Hoxton and Kingsland, and who was a member of a great City

firm of merchants. In November, 1679, when the girl was just thirteen and the boy fourteen, the marriage took place in Hackney Church.

At what age this young couple began to share the same home is not told us, but they were staid man and wife between four and five years later, when death stepped in and dissolved the marriage. William Whitmore had been to Epsom and was driving home alone in his coach, with his pistol lying on the seat beside him. By some accident the weapon went off and buried its contents in its owner's legs. Young as he was the lad made the best use he could of the few hours of life remaining to him, and he must have been much in love with his girl wife, for he made his will, leaving all he possessed to her, and then died. This was on July 31st, and four days later the prudent Mrs. Whitmore, in her anxiety to be absolutely certain of her property, proved the will, thus provoking from her historian a pious hope that it was after she had laid her husband's remains with those of his father in the chancel of Ramsey Church, Essex. William Whitmore was buried, as seems to have been a favourite custom of the time, under his own pew, and a black marble stone formed alike a memorial to him and the floor upon which his successors trod.

How long or how much the fair Frances mourned her husband's early death it is not easy to say, but in nine months she found time to do that, to amuse herself in passing under review those young men who were ready to take the widow and her income, and to get married. One of the aspirants for her hand was Edward, Viscount Cornbury, third Earl of



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Clarendon, “twice-jilted Cornbury,” as a verse in the *State Poems* describes him :

“The next fine widow Whitmore, she
Is told of gentle Cornb——;
But the sly wight secur’d the Prey
And flying bore the nymph away.”

The “sly wight” whom she married in April, 1685, was Sir Richard Middleton, third baronet, who owned Chirk Castle, and who was for thirty years Member of Parliament for Denbighshire. He was also nephew to Mrs. Jane Middleton’s husband. For nine years the Middletons pleased or teased each other, and then Frances died, being only twenty-eight years old, predeceasing her husband by twenty-two years.

In this account there is no reason shown as to why she should have been included in the Court Beauties, and for this omission the curious reticence concerning the doings at the Courts of Mary and Anne must be blamed. Only one woman of that period has really been much mentioned in history, Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, and she took up so much attention that she filled the whole canvas almost from the time of her girlhood.

CHAPTER XVII

ISABELLA BENNET, DUCHESS OF GRAFTON

“ You took her up a little tender flower,
Just sprouted on a bank, which the next frost
Had nipped ; and, with a careful loving hand,
Transplanted her into your own fair garden,
Where the sun always shines ; there long she flourished,
Grew sweet to sense, and lovely to the eye.”

Thomas Otway.

WHEN Henry Bennet, Earl of Arlington, met with his repulse at the hands of the silly Frances Stuart, he was said to make up his mind immediately not to appear as a disconsolate lover ; and in order to keep to this resolution he went over to Holland to find a wife. The lady he chose and who accepted him was, but for the bend sinister, of high birth, being granddaughter of Maurice, Prince of Orange, and daughter of Lewis de Nassau, Lord Beverwaert. Arlington was not a popular man—the Marquis de Ruvigny once said of him that he would sell his soul to the devil to worst an enemy—but he won his bride quickly enough and brought her back to England. They had but one child, the little Isabella, whose marriage occasioned almost as great a stir and as many heart-burnings as did the second marriage of Elizabeth Percy.

Lady Arlington and Lady Sunderland soon became great friends, and were on intimate terms for years.



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They, at the instigation of the French ambassador, promoted the mock marriage between Louise de Kéroualle and Charles II ; they constantly visited each other and made plans together for the future. If there was one subject which seemed to need the earnest thought of English ladies at that time, it was the settling of their children matrimonially. As soon as a child was born the mother began to cast about for its possible partner, looking particularly for what she considered a suitable position with suitable wealth ; which of course generally meant that the other child should have a higher position and more wealth than her own. Logically carried out this would bring about no marriages at all ; but the whole matter was one of bargain, and the bargainers always allowed a margin in their demand which could be reduced when they really came to business.

About the same time that Lady Arlington's daughter was born Lady Sunderland gave birth to a son, and there was something of a promise between the two mothers that their children should be given to each other in marriage. Both the husbands were rising men, inclined to amass wealth and honours, and all things considered, the match promised to be satisfactory to both sides. The fathers also spoke of this idea and agreed that the arrangement would be a pleasant one for the advancement of both families.

But they had all reckoned without a certain lady who, feeling that things were not going well with her, determined to gather as much wealth around her as possible before she owned herself defeated. After the advent of the French "miss" Lady Castlemaine knew that her reign was over, so she first secured

titles, houses, and estates for herself ; then she demanded safeguards against poverty for her children. One of the safeguards she coveted was little Isabella Bennet, an infant not then five years old. Barbara went as usual to Charles with her idea, and after much discussion he was badgered into demanding the child as a bride for Henry Fitzroy, the second son, then eight years old. This demand fell like a bomb into the household of Euston, where the first impulse was to refuse compliance. Barbara, though of high lineage, was disliked everywhere for her coarse, low manners and her bad reputation ; while it was known that her children were being brought up in the most casual fashion, with little education, spoiled by their erratic mother one day and buffeted the next. Various feeble attempts were made to escape the suggested alliance, but a king's word was arbitrary in those days, even over the private affairs of a subject, and the betrothal duly took place on August 1st, 1672, when little Isabella was four and a half years old. Archbishop Sheldon performed the ceremony in the presence of the King and all the Court. John Evelyn, who attended, records in melancholy fashion that "I had a favour given me by my Lady ; but took no great joy at the thing for many reasons."

In July, before this marriage contract took place, Buckingham, who in versatile mood was always ready to interfere in other people's concerns, tried to persuade Charles not to let the arrangements for the union go on, as he knew of a bride who was much better suited to his son, this being Elizabeth Percy, then about a year older than Isabella. Charles, how-

ever, said that his proposition came too late, the other matter being concluded.

Through the years that intervened between this event and the actual marriage in 1679, when the contracting parties were respectively fifteen and twelve, the dissatisfaction of Lord and Lady Arlington augmented rather than lessened, and rumours were constantly afloat, even as late as 1678, that the match was broken off. The Sunderlands were sore about it, Lord Sunderland complaining openly of Arlington and saying that he held his promise for his daughter's marrying his son. In the meanwhile the boy had been made Earl of Euston—the name being taken from Arlington's country seat—and had in 1675 received the title of Duke of Grafton.

As the marriage really seemed quite inevitable, Arlington thought the only thing to do was to make the best of it and train the bridegroom as well as he could for his position in life. To this end he invited the boy to Euston that he might know him better, but Barbara, probably aware of her child's deficiency in manners, refused to let him go. Then Arlington appealed to the King, who said he should go, and the Chamberlain took the boy with him. After this he made plans for having him properly taught, but once again Barbara strongly objected ; she would not and could not part with him, she said, and in fact she did not care "for any education other than what nature and herself can give him, which will be sufficient accomplishment for a married man."

Then suddenly, on November 6th, 1679, when it had for long been common talk that the second marriage would never take place, it was solemnized

at Whitehall in the apartments of the Lord Chamberlain—for Lord Arlington held this post—by the Bishop of Rochester.

The ceremony had probably been hurried on by Barbara Cleveland, who had come back to England on a visit, and who had no idea of seeing this matrimonial prize slip out of the reach of her family. The King was present, and at the subsequent supper sat between the Duchess of Cleveland and “the sweet Duchess, the bride.” Evelyn, who had been invited, was full of foreboding and commiseration : “ I confess I could give her [Lady Arlington] little joy, and so I plainly told her, but she said the King would have it so, and there was no going back. This sweetest, hopefulllest, most beautiful child, and most virtuous too, was sacrificed to a boy that had been rudely bred, without anything to encourage them but His Majesty’s pleasure. I pray God the sweet child find it to her advantage, who, if my augury deceive me not, will in few years be such a paragon as were fit to make the wife of the greatest Prince in Europe ! I staid supper, where His Majesty sat between the Duchess of Cleveland (the mother of the Duke of Grafton) and the sweet Duchess, the bride ; there were several great persons and ladies, without pomp. My love to my Lord Arlington’s family and the sweet child made me behold all this with regret, though as the Duke of Grafton affects the sea, to which I find his father intends to use him, he may emerge a plain, useful, and robust officer ; and were he polished, a tolerable person.”

Evelyn was perhaps too much affected by the knowledge of what Barbara, the boy’s mother, was

in character, to be quite fair to the young untried bridegroom. As a matter of fact, the Duke of Grafton was certainly the most gallant of Charles's six sons who grew to manhood, and he unfortunately died in battle in 1690, before he was thirty. He was besides extremely handsome, far more so than any of Charles's other children excepting the Duke of Monmouth. He was sent as a volunteer to learn his profession under Sir John Berry, and had one honour after another heaped upon him, being made Knight of the Garter, an Elder Brother of Trinity House, Colonel of the first Foot Guards, and, on the death of Prince Rupert, Vice-Admiral of England. He was Lord High Constable at the coronation of James II, and active in suppressing the Monmouth rebellion.

Lord Arlington had built for himself a noble house at Euston, in Suffolk. Macaulay speaks of its "stately pavilions, the fish-ponds, the deer-park, and the orangery"; and this palace, as it was generally named, was brought into the Grafton family by Isabella, who became Countess of Arlington in her own right on her father's death. One side of the building contained various apartments, kitchen, offices, servants' lodgings, everything complete of which to make a house, and the Earl said it was his intention to retire here and wholly resign the palace itself to his son-in-law and daughter, "that charming young creature."

The young Duke, however, had evidently a house in town, as his first child, a boy, was born there in November, 1683. Evelyn is almost the only chronicler who has mentioned the Duchess, and he does so always with admiration and affection. "I went to compli-

ment the Duchess of Grafton, now lying-in of her first child, a son, which she called for that I might see it. She was become more beautiful, if it were possible, than before, and full of virtue and sweetness. She discoursed with me of many particulars, with great prudence and gravity beyond her years."

The Duke of Grafton was loyal to his uncle until the last week or so of his reign, when with Churchill he went over to the side of William. In the Monmouth rebellion he showed great gallantry, and nearly lost his life at Philip Norton, near Bath, about which the rebels lay hidden. He led a body of five hundred men against them, and his way lay through a deep lane with fences on both sides. When the company had got thoroughly into the lane a galling fire of musketry broke out from the hedges, but the Duke pushed on until he reached the entrance to Philip Norton. There the road was crossed by a barricade and a third deadly fire met them. His men's courage failed and they retreated, losing a hundred men, and there was nothing for Grafton to do but to gallop after them. At one point rebel horsemen surrounded him, but he cut his way through and came off safely.

In the year following he made himself notorious by fighting two fatal duels, though little information remains about them excepting that he killed Mr. Stanley, brother to the Earl of Derby, upon "an almost insufferable provocation."

There are on record many brave deeds done by this man, who inherited a king-like spirit if he could not claim the name of a king, and in 1690, when only twenty-seven, he went over to Ireland and led four

regiments, wading up to the armpits in water to effect a landing under the walls of Cork and storm the town through a breach. They had almost succeeded when a shot broke two of his ribs and mortally wounded him. His body was brought back to England and buried at Euston, he being widely lamented for his reckless courage, his daring, and his honest if rough temperament. He left but one son, who was in no sense his father's equal, though he was not so stupid as he was painted. Of him Lord John Hervey wrote :

“So your friend booby Grafton I'll e'en let you keep ;
Awake he can't hurt ; and he's still half asleep.”

He gained renown by making love to Princess Amelia, between whom and himself there was a romantic attachment, though he was old enough to have been her father.

After the Duke of Grafton's death his varioue “places” were eagerly sought, and a post as Prothonotary, or Chief Clerk in the Law, which had been conferred upon him and his son by Charles II—who lightly filled important posts with boys and unable favourites—was desired by the legal fraternity, the Lord Chief Justice challenging the right of the young Duke to retain it; upon which the spirited Isabella appealed to the House of Lords. How it ended cannot be told, except that “the judges were severely reproved for something they said.”

At her husband's death Isabella was in the ripeness of her beauty—only twenty-three years old, and possessed of one of the first positions in the land. It is not to be wondered at that she married again, though she remained a widow eight years; then she

chose for her husband a man who was young, handsome and clever, and “possessed of very considerable paternal estates.” This was Sir Thomas Hanmer, who became one of the most considered men in the House of Commons, and who travelled much with the Duke of Ormond. He was associated with Swift in the production of political pamphlets and kept up a friendship with the Dean to the end of their lives. He was a Tory until 1713, when he became Whig, was elected Speaker without opposition in succession to Bromley in 1714, and there was a rumour that he would become Secretary of State.

Isabella must have been very conservative, for we have a picture of her in 1711 which shows that she still affected the curious dress of her prime. Thus Mary II brought into fashion a kind of lace head-dress, rising one tier above another on the top of the head, an adornment, or rather defacement, which was soon discredited. Yet years later Swift described dining with the Duchess of Grafton—she kept her titles all through—and her husband, and wrote of her : “She wears a great high head-dress such as was in fashion fifteen years ago, and looks like a mad woman in it ; yet she has great remains of beauty.” She died in 1723, when nearly fifty-six years of age.

CHAPTER XVIII

DIANA DE VERE, DUCHESS OF ST. ALBANS

“Once I beheld the fairest of her kind
(And still the sweet idea charms my mind) ;
True she was dumb ; for Nature gazed so long,
Pleased with her work, that she forgot her tongue,
But smiling said, She still shall gain the prize ;
I only have transferred it to her eyes.
Such are thy pictures, Kneller, such thy skill,
That Nature seems obedient to thy will ;
Comes out and meets thy pencil in the draught,
Lives there, and wants but words to speak her thought.”

Dryden.

If Charles II launched upon society six Dukes of irregular birth, it was not because there were not men at his Court whose family history was of the highest order ; and there is something satiric in the fact that the wanton King should bring about a marriage between the daughter of a family possessing the longest and most heroic lineage in his realm, “the Fighting Veres,” and the son of the orange-girl Nell. If this really was his doing he was only actuated by the ordinary parental desire to do the best he could for his offspring. It is not unlikely that he also did a good thing for the race in mating a sturdy son of a robust and low-born mother with the last representative of an old family. Yet it is altogether doubtful whether Charles had anything to do with the matter, as the poor man was dead and buried nine

years before Charles Beauclerc and Diana de Vere were married.

Mrs. Jameson was very sentimental over Nell Gwyn and remarks that her son was made Baron of Heddington and Earl of Burford in 1676, and that "about this time the heiress of the Veres was betrothed by the King to the young Earl. Nell Gwyn lived to see the future wife of her son in the infancy of those charms which made her one of the most conspicuous of the Kneller Beauties."

Now as Charles Beauclerc was born in 1670, and was that same year made Baron Heddington and Earl of Burford, there seems to be some discrepancy in this writer's facts, and there probably is some in her sentimental effusion concerning Nell Gwyn. In 1676 Diana must have been a veritable baby, even if she was in existence, and the marriage, which was most probably brought about by spontaneous attraction, did not take place until 1694. We can hardly imagine a betrothal which lasted eighteen years, and certainly had there been a contract of marriage the ceremony would have taken place years earlier.

It is quite evident that Diana was a prize in the matrimonial market, and not only for her wealth ; for here and there one comes across a hint of jealousy and envy on the part of other young men—"the lucky husband of the lovely Diana"—remarks which would scarcely have been made had she been contracted for many years. By 1694 the Duke of St. Albans, a title he received in 1684, had proved his valour, his steadiness, and his good sense, and was much more the equal not only of his bride, but of his bride's father, than he could have been in 1676.



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Then there might have been some resistance on the score of low birth, and one wonders how the old Earl, whose pedigree was longer than that of many kings, including Charles, would have accepted Nell Gwyn as a connection, even though he had obliged the King in standing sponsor to Barbara's first son.

Aubrey de Vere, Earl of Oxford, merits a word or two. In his own day he was said to be the noblest subject in Europe, and his forerunners had taken their part at Hastings, in the Crusades, at Runnymede, at Crecy, and Poictiers. One Earl had been the leader of the party of the Red Rose, another had shone at the Court of Elizabeth, and Aubrey's father had fallen under the walls of Maestricht in defence of Protestantism, while he himself had later to suffer for his religion by losing his offices at Court. At the Restoration he was given a seat in the Privy Council, was made a Knight of the Garter and Lord-Lieutenant of Essex. He was Colonel of a regiment known as the Oxford Blues, generally after his death spoken of as "the Blues." With all this he was a man of inoffensive temper, courtly manners, and of loose morals —his mistress being Mrs. Davenport, better known as Roxalana, whom he secured by a mock marriage.

Pepys tells us of a ridiculous falling out at the house of the Earl of Oxford one day in 1663, the friends with him on that occasion including Belasyse and Tom Porter. "There were high words and some blows, and pulling off of periwigs, till my Lord Monk took away some of their swords and sent for soldiers to guard the house until the fray ended." The French ambassador, in writing an account of the affair to France, says that after the fight had been brought

to an end the inimical friends stayed so long that they needed to eat again, and then as they again required strong drink, General Monk presented to each man a *banap*, a very large bowl of wine, which they must drink, or go away. A few went, but most of them stayed there until the next day without speaking to each other. The ambassador names it “a very pleasant affair.”

But this little pleasantry happened years before either Diana or Beauclerc was born, neither of whom attracted much public attention in youth. The boy was fourteen years old when he received his dukedom ; and on Easter Day of that year, the Bishop of Rochester preaching before the King, he was present with his father. Evelyn tells us that after the sermon His Majesty, with three of his natural sons, the Duke of Northumberland, son of Lady Cleveland, the Duke of Richmond, son of Lady Portsmouth, and the Duke of St. Albans, son of Nell Gwyn, went up to the altar ; the three boys entering before the King within the rails at the right hand, and the three Bishops on the left, they being the Bishops of London—who officiated—of Durham, and of Rochester. Evelyn adds in a later mention of the boys : “ What the Dukes of Richmond and St. Albans will prove their youth does not yet discover ; they are very pretty boys.”

King Charles was always willing to bestow honours upon his boys as well as posts for which they were quite unfitted. Thus the Duke of Richmond became Grand Equerry when only a baby, and St. Albans was a young boy when he was made Master Falconer, a post which had doubtless already become a mere sinecure.

The only reference we have concerning Diana in her girlhood is that, at Mary's coronation in 1689, during which so many mistakes were made and over which hung so much gloom, she was one of the train-bearers to the Queen, one of the other ladies being the Duchess of Somerset, the wife of the "Proud" Duke. Diana was maid of honour to Mary until she was married in 1694. From that time she must have been much occupied in following the career of her husband and in attending to the fine family of eight sons with which she presented him. After his marriage the Duke was allowed a pension of £2000 a year from the Crown, and he also held the office of Registrar of the High Court of Chancery, which was worth £1500 a year, so he had a good income at the value of money at that time, and furthermore he was much in favour with William. He received the Colonelyc of a regiment of horse, distinguished himself at the siege of Belgrade, and became a Captain of the Pensioners. Once, to show his favour, the King bestowed upon him a "sett of coach horses finely spotted like leopards," rather an embarrassing gift, one would have thought. He was sent on important embassies, and once, the year after his marriage, had the good fortune to accomplish what forty people had vainly tried to do, including his stepbrother the Duke of Northumberland; that is to escape from three highwaymen who had plundered all those people on Hounslow Heath in one night! If this is true the plundered ones must have actually offered their valuables to the robbers, who "attempted" the Duke of St. Albans unsuccessfully.

When the Tories came in, St. Albans the Whig had

to rusticate and lose most of his good appointments, but George I reinstated him and made him a Knight of the Garter. He died in 1726, and his widow survived him sixteen years. The pity is that the ascertainable facts about her are so few.

CHAPTER XIX

MARGARET CECIL, COUNTESS OF RANELAGH

“I who was late so volatile and gay,
Like a trade wind must now blow all one way,
Bend all my cares, my studies, and my vows,
To one dull rusty weathercock—my spouse!”

Sheridan.

IT would not be easy to forget the light-hearted Mr. Richard Jones, the friend, the confidant, and the rival of the Chevalier de Gramont, who was once in love with “the most beautiful, lazy, languishing, affected, and irresistible” woman in London, Mrs. Jane Middleton. He had been very much in love and had disposed of many handsome presents when the Frenchman appeared, anxiously seeking some goddess whom he could adore. As Richard Jones was wearying of the fair Jane and was also exceedingly weary of parting with so much good money, he welcomed Gramont effusively, helped him in his love-making, and when there was danger of his being outrivaled warned him to beware.

This astute gentleman was an Irishman, “a man of great parts and as great vices ; he had a pleasantness in his conversation which took much with the King ; and had a great dexterity in business.” So says Burnet, who spoke with personal knowledge. His dexterity was sometimes exercised in a way which, had he been

a poor and obscure man, would have earned him not only the name, but the fate of a thief. He persuaded the King practically to farm out Ireland to him, and in return he diverted a considerable amount of money into Charles's pocket and allowed the Duchess of Portsmouth to dip her hands pretty deeply into his Treasury. When it came to getting his accounts duly passed neither he nor Charles was quite so happy, and the latter used his influence to persuade Lord Essex to pass the accounts without examining them. To which that upright man replied that he would declare the Earl of Ranelagh to be excused from presenting his accounts, but that he could not do more.

Richard had become Viscount Ranelagh on his father's death, and Charles made him an Earl in 1674, also appointing him Gentleman of the Bedchamber three years later. His honours settled him yet more firmly in his Vice-Treasurership of Ireland, and by 1681 his books were in such disorder that a sum of £76,000 was missing, which was demanded of him—a demand remitted by the King's favour. He was Privy Councillor and Paymaster-General of the Forces under James, as well as under William, and in 1702 he was publicly accused of owing millions to the State. As he preferred to resign his post rather than face an inquiry, he was regarded as guilty, was expelled from Parliament, and an address demanding his prosecution was presented to Queen Anne. His friends, however, were jubilant and commiserated him as being unjustly accused when they found that his defalcations amounted only to the trifling sum of £72,000! The extraordinary thing is that a man who from the first was proved to be dishonest should



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all through a long life have been thrust into positions of trust where it was only too easy to peculate.

After his disgrace his influence at Court allowed him once again to go scot free of any penalty, and further it got him the appointment of Governor of Queen Anne's Bounty for the Augmentation of the Maintenance of Poor Clergymen ! It is to be hoped that the poor clergymen were allowed to take some share of the money which thus passed through the hands of the notorious Earl.

This is the man whom Margaret Cecil, daughter of James, the third Earl of Salisbury, who for " loyalty, generosity, and affability was most likely to advance the noble name of Cecil to the utmost period of glory," elected to marry, choosing him from many suitors. She had been married as a child to John Lord Stowell or Stawell, and at the age of nineteen was so fascinated by the humour and gay disposition of the irresponsible Irishman, who was just sixty years old and the father of four grown-up daughters, and further was " frisky and juvenile, curly and gay," that she thought it a happiness to become his second wife.

Henry Fielding in describing Sophia Western can think of no more beautiful person to whom to liken her than Lady Ranelagh. " Reader, perhaps thou hast seen the statue of the *Venus de Medici*. Perhaps too thou hast seen the gallery of beauties at Hampton Court. . . . Or if their reign was before thy time, at least thou hast seen their daughters, the no less dazzling beauties of the present age. . . . If thou hast seen all these without knowing what beauty is, thou hast no eyes ; if without feeling its power, thou hast no heart.

Yet is it possible, my friend, that thou mayst have seen all these without being able to form an exact idea of Sophia ; for she did not exactly resemble any of them. She was most like the picture of Lady Ranelagh."

Lady Ranelagh's life can only be most meagrely described by indicating that of her husband. She was one of Queen Anne's ladies, and was probably, earlier, Lady of the Bedchamber to Queen Mary. One wonders if she sympathized with Mary in her extraordinary horticultural craze for clipped yews, Dutch gardens, and the artificial training of beautiful plants, with which she transformed the grounds of Hampton Court. If Ranelagh had a virtue out of the ordinary, it lay in his love for and attention to floriculture. This was so strong that Charles appointed him Superintendent of the Royal edifices and pleasure grounds, sending him to try his prentice hand on Hampton Court. It may be hoped that his taste was better than that of Queen Mary, who followed him in arranging those gardens and probably altered all that he did. It is said that Ranelagh ruined himself by building his house and laying out his gardens just east of Chelsea College ; if so he and his wife found in it a solace and a joy after his disgrace. Here they spent their days, and in spite of all his faults Ranelagh could always be happy in a garden. After his death Ranelagh House was for a time one of the most fashionable and fascinating of resorts for those who had money to spend.

There is a story that the Earl disinherited his only daughter because she married Lord Coningsby, a brave, eccentric, blundering man, and left all his property to Greenwich Hospital ; but this could

scarcely be true, as he had four daughters, and there is an account of the place having been bequeathed in the next century to the surviving wife of a later Viscount Ranelagh. The Earl also possessed a house at Cranburn, one of the “finest places for nature and plantations that ever I saw,” remarked Swift, who visited it.

The Dean commented upon Ranelagh’s death, which occurred in January, 1711-12: “He was very poor and needy, and could hardly support himself for want of a pension which used to be paid him, and which his friends solicited as a thing of perfect charity. He died hard, as the term of art here is to express the woeful state of men who discover no religion at their death.”

Poor Margaret Cecil, she was nineteen when she married in 1696, which would make her thirty-five at her husband’s death. He was then seventy-six, disgraced, shunned, and in poverty! Surely her life could have had little gaiety in it, and it is allowable to hope that during the sixteen years that remained to her she was at least relieved from necessity and enabled to find life amusing.

CHAPTER XX

MARY COMPTON, COUNTESS OF DORSET

“The gen’rous god, who wit and gold refines,
And ripens spirits as he ripens mines,
Kept dross for duchesses, the world shall know it,
To you gave sense, good-humour, and a poet.”

Pope.

AFTER the death of his wife—once Countess Falmouth—within a year of their marriage, Lord Dorset remained a widower for about six years, until 1685. Then he married Mary, daughter of James Compton, the third Earl of Northampton, and niece to that Spencer Compton who had been so much in love with Anne Hyde, and who might have given her so much happier a life than did James, Duke of York. She was also niece to Bishop Compton, one of the stoutest resisters to the new invasion of Papacy, and one of the seven who signed the invitation to William to accept the Crown of England.

Mary Compton was now in her youth the wife of one of the social paradoxes of the time. Dorset had been one of the wildest young men of Charles’s reign; he with Sedley had been twice publicly charged with faults which disgraced themselves as much as they insulted the witnesses. On one occasion in the garb of Adam before the fall they had from the



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(*After Kneller*)

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balcony of an inn harangued the crowd in blasphemous language ; on another they were charged with assaulting the watch and rushing about the streets without their clothes on. Dorset too had been one of the party, including Henry Belasyse, who killed the tanner and rifled his pockets. Yet in his maturer age he was known as a man of letters, of kindly heart and sincere manners. He patronized men of literary worth and was a friend of Dryden. On one occasion, when at his house at Knole Park, in Kent, with a party of friends, it was agreed that each man should write an impromptu, of which Dryden should name the best. Dorset wrote a line or two and threw the paper over to Dryden. It ran, “I promise to pay Mr. Dryden £500 on demand.” Such an impromptu could be given no second place by a needy poet. Dorset was also the author of the well-known poem : “To all you ladies now on land.”

When he married Mary Compton he was in early middle age and had finished sowing his wild oats ; thus his true character had a chance of appearing, and it expressed itself in a love for his wife and home, his fidelity to his Countess causing Sir George Etherege to write of him with great contempt. They lived chiefly at Copt Hall, at Waltham, where we hear twice of the Countess, and she seems certainly to have been both an accomplished housewife and a woman of resource.

On one occasion King James, who, during his brother’s reign, had hunted three times a week, started out for a day’s hunting, an amusement which was not impossible round London in those days. The quarry led him to Hatfield, where it was killed, and James,

finding that his horse was worn out, determined to go to Copt Hall, which was fairly near, for a rest. It happened that Dorset had gone out to dine; Lady Dorset drove out to see some friends, and gave her butler and cook liberty to attend Waltham Fair, so much renowned. Indeed, most of the servants had also gone there, for the house seems to have been practically locked up. When the King's messenger arrived and told the groom he saw who was coming, the only thing the man could think of doing was to ride after his mistress and bring her back. He was fortunate in catching her, and gave the King's message as he had received it. The poor lady hesitated for a minute, tempted to get out of an embarrassing and difficult situation by continuing her journey and pretending not to have heard that the King was there. But a second messenger followed the first, hot with dismay and fearing that his mistress would not be found.

Lady Dorset drove home quickly at this and, arrived there, sent her coach to meet the King that he might travel with greater ease. Then she and her maid went down to the kitchen and pantries, and where they found doors locked and the keys safely hidden away by the careful cook or butler, they called a man to break them open. Thus when the King arrived he found a table laid with Royal magnificence and a most excellent dinner awaiting him. This rather smacks of the fairy story, but it is told in all solemnity in the life of a great statesman. When the King at last went his way again, rested, fed, and content, he met Lord Dorset on the road, who could not enough express his regret at not being at home.

"Make no excuse, my lord," replied the King; "it was exceedingly well done and very handsome."

Dorset was a Whig, and fully sympathized with the desire to offer the Crown to William and Mary. Thus the next incident belongs to a time of trouble and unrest. Churchill, Grafton, and George of Denmark—"est-il-possible," as James nicknamed him, from his constant iteration of the phrase—had sneaked over from the side of James to that of William. Anne, full of duplicity and ambition, feared how much her father knew about her own doings in the matter and determined to flee from Whitehall before the King returned to it. So one night Sarah Churchill and Lady Fitzharding, one of the notorious Villiers sisters, stole up the back stairs and waited until the clock struck one. Then, when she was sure that all was quiet, Anne slipped down with them, and they went through the Park in torrents of rain to a coach which Bishop Compton had in readiness for her. Dorset was waiting at the door from which they emerged, and helped the Princess the short distance through the mud of the Park to the conveyance. On the way one of her high-heeled shoes got stuck fast and was lost in the darkness, which gave her great amusement, and she tried to hop on one foot until Dorset, taking off one of his long gloves, begged her to put it on as a shoe, thus causing peals of laughter. The Bishop took them all to his house in Aldersgate Street, so that Anne could sleep there the remainder of the night; and in the morning they set out for Copt Hall.

Here the Princess was welcomed by Lady Dorset with all the hospitality and state for which her home

was famed, whether it was King, Princess, or poet who asked for her kindness ; but because of its proximity to London the party could not stay there long. So they rode to Nottingham, the Bishop exchanging his gaiters for a buff coat and jack-boots, and his hymnal for a sword and pistols.

When Mary was safely settled on the throne she made Lady Dorset one of her Ladies of the Bedchamber, and the Countess's little son became a favourite with the brusque and taciturn William. Horace Walpole tells a story that when the King was in his private closet at Kensington there came a tap at the door.

"Who is there ?" asked the King.

"Lord Buck," was the answer. Buckhurst being one of Dorset's titles.

"And what does Lord Buck want ?" asked the King, going out to the four-year-old child.

"You to be horse to my coach ; I've wanted you a long time."

King William succumbed to the autocratic young gentleman and dragged the toy cart up and down the gallery until the child was satisfied.

Lord Dorset was not to be happy with Mary long, for she died in August, 1691, when her boy was but a little over three years old, and there is no record of the illness from which she suffered. Queen Mary was deeply grieved at her loss, for she knew what a loyal, clever friend the Countess was. The Countess of Nottingham took her place at Court. Lady Dorset was renowned not for her immorality or her flippant wit, but for her beauty and her understanding ; and though understanding is one of the most valuable assets in life, it is not a showy one, and in Lady Dorset's

case it has not given that temptation to the gossips and letter-writers of the period to record her doings as a more flamboyant quality would have done.

Her son Lionel Cranfield Sackville was the first Duke of Dorset.

CHAPTER XXI

MARY BENTINCK, COUNTESS OF ESSEX

“If you mark, when for her pleasure,
She vouchsafes to foot a measure,
Though with others’ skill she pace,
There’s a sweet delightful grace
In herself which doth prefer
Art beyond that art in her.”

George Wither.

Of Mary Bentinck there is nothing to record excepting her parentage, her marriage, and her death. She was the eldest daughter of William Bentinck, the first Earl of Portland, who was, especially in his early life, so devoted to his master William of Orange. Of him it is told that when William was taken ill with small-pox, he never left his side until the disease had been conquered ; then, feeling very ill himself, he begged that he might have a holiday, and went away to suffer the same terrible illness without letting the knowledge of it weigh upon the Prince in his convalescence. He it was who received the confidences and witnessed the emotions of the taciturn husband of Mary II. “Does the King never talk ?” asked a nobleman of one of the youths who served His Majesty at table.

“Only in the evening, when he is with my Lord Portland and other Dutch friends, drinking Sniedam and smoking,” was the reply.

The first child was born to William Bentinck and



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his wife in 1679, so that Mary was nearly ten years old before she came to England. The man she married was Algernon, the second Earl of Essex, son of that good man about whose mysterious and violent death in the Tower there were so many conflicting accounts. His birth took place in 1670, and almost from his childhood he was an upholder of the pretensions of William of Orange to the English throne. He served with him in Flanders, was a Lieutenant-General of the army and Colonel of the 4th Regiment of Dragoons. He came to England with William and his inseparable adviser Bentinck, whose daughter he married in 1692. The peerage books give this date and also 1698, but Mary's first child, a son, was born in 1697, and therefore it is reasonable to believe in the earlier date.

Mary was fond of dancing, and at a ball given at St. James's she is picked out by a contemporary as one of the best dancers present, while her husband is mentioned as one of the three best among the men ; a small item of news, which yet lets in a little light upon her character.

It is hardly possible to believe that this portrait was painted when the Countess was an immature girl of sixteen, and it is probable that William ordered the number of portraits to be completed after his wife's death, for Kneller worked in England into the reign of George I. It was from her husband's sister, who as Lady Carlisle lived to a great age, that we have the story of Queen Mary's obstinacy in forming this gallery of beauties.

During the reign of Anne Lord Essex was made Constable of the Tower of London, a post which he

held until his death in 1710. Four years later his wife married a second time, her husband being Sir Conyers D'Arcy. By her first marriage she had one son and two daughters, but there is no record of children by the second. She died in 1726.

This account of a group of women long since dead has drawn to its close, and one reflection must come to all who have read the foregoing pages. It is that the lives of the greatest sinners give far more scope to the biographer, and are studied with far more interest by the reader than the lives of the virtuous. It is, however, idle to apologize for the deficiencies of history, which, however scientific it should be in its aim, always describes dramatic events rather than domestic virtues.

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